

CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY LOOP WALK L2: KINGS CROSS



- Main Walk:** ——— **Loop and Connecting Walks:** ——— **Alternative Routes:** - - -
- Distance:** 3km.
- Time:** 1 hour 15 mins.
- Level:** Easy.
- Transport:** Kings Cross Station; Kings Cross buses.
- Connects with:** Main Walk and Federation Track (Kings Cross-Elizabeth Bay); Connection Walk C1 (Woolloomooloo).
- Facilities:** *Toilets:* Fitzroy Gardens, Beare Park.
Picnic spots: Embarkation Park, Fitzroy Gardens, Arthur McElhone Reserve;
- Graham Spindler 2007 - Loop 2 - Kings Cross: 1

Shops or hotels: throughout.

Inevitably the area of this walk is called Kings Cross, although in fact it takes in parts of Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay and touches on Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst as well. A walk through the area is not just about social change, architecture or the great sweep of history (although it is about all three) but, particularly it is about people, and particularly people in the arts. In fact, a guided walk here tends to become an essay in name-dropping.

The Cross has changed directions, socially, many times. It has been Sydney's most colourful, notorious, bohemian, seedy, corrupt, lively, cosmopolitan, visited, and stayed-away-from suburb. By the 1920s the Cross was sharing some of Darlinghurst's reputation for gunmen, crime, prostitution and gang wars. It was also becoming a landscape of flats and boarding houses housing an increasing flood of aspiring artists and intellectuals whose presence began creating an Australian Bohemia. Before, during and after WWII, European refugees – some also intellectuals or artists – added their flavour to the area as well. In WWII came the Americans and the Cross began to become brassier, although Bohemia revived in the post-war decades. The Vietnam War and the '70s and '80s and tourism changed the Cross's direction again.

Part of the Gadigal country, its original inhabitants took the first brunt of European settlement and were finally displaced by European settlers who were the genteel, prosperous and powerful of Sydney. Judges, politicians, leading public servants and merchants were attracted to the high ridge for its fine town and harbour views. Governor Darling demanded that the houses on Woolloomooloo Hill had to face towards Sydney and be elegant and expensive. One such was *Brougham Lodge*, home between 1831 and his death in 1844, of Chief Justice Sir James Dowling. It stood near the crossroads that were to give the area its name. In time, the great houses were subdivided and most demolished, with streets like Victoria Street being created as a result around the 1870s. The terraces arrived as, socially, the area slid downwards into the twentieth century.

*Loop 1 begins by turning left at the top of the McElhone Stairs while the **Main Walk** turns up Challis Avenue. Explore the rooftop of the Navy car park.*

This area is Potts Point (named for Joseph Potts, Accountant to the Bank of NSW who bought the land off Judge John Wylde. Neither of them ever lived here. Queen Anne terraces catch the eye to the right, but to the left houses disappear from Victoria Street and small pedestrian bridges link to the large, mannered but delightful roof garden on top of the brutalist bands of concrete that make up the Department of Defence Car Park for Garden Island naval base. Between the swamp oaks is a wonderful view across the redevelopments of the historic wharves that once welcomed visitors and migrants to Sydney and sent its soldiers off to war. Beyond the vista sweeps the Domain, the Opera House, the Bridge, Kirribilli and Neutral Bay, and back to Garden Island. The Fleet wharf below often contributes an interesting foreground of warships crouching under arrays of radomes, scanners, antennae and masts.

Cross over and into the St Neots Avenue - Grantham Street - Oak Lane turnings, then turn left into Wylde Avenue, following it downhill 100m or so.

On Wylde Avenue, 1960s blocks of flats make up HMAS *Kuttabul* naval barracks which are named after the Sydney Harbour ferry sunk at the wharf below on Garden Island during the Japanese midget submarine raid into Sydney Harbour on 31 May 1942. Nineteen young sailors died on board *Kuttabul*. Other deaths from the attack were the six crewmen of the three submarines but the attack had another dramatic, if short term, impact as many people moved out. Real estate values and rents dropped and, very briefly, there were vacant flats to be found in the area.

The new *Kuttabul* stands on the site of *Clarens*, the grand home of Sir James Martin (1820-86), nineteenth century Premier and Chief Justice of NSW. *Clarens* was distinguished by its extraordinary garden (described as a "fairyland" by novelist Anthony Trollope) which featured copies of Greek monuments. One of them, the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, now stands in the Botanic Gardens. *Clarens* was demolished in 1966 though some of its garden has since been restored.

Almost everything north, west and east of this point was Navy property in WWII and for several decades after, much of it having either been resumed or created during the war. Some of it has since been re-privatised. These include *Wyldefel Gardens*, barely memorable at street level but at the time of their completion in 1936 a landmark in modern residential architecture in Australia. The original house, *Wyldefel*, on the site was the home of Walter and Eliza Hall, who made their fortune through Cobb & Co and Mount Morgan and were great benefactors. The Walter and Eliza

Hall Institute of Research in pathology and medicine is one of their bequests. Businessman and unrelenting traveller and collector, W. A. Crowle, bought *Wyldefel* and in 1936, in cooperation with architect John R. Brogan, built two wings of flat-roofed P&O style garden apartments starting either side of the house and cascading down the hillside - a progressive modern style, quite controversial in Sydney at time. Poet Bob Cummings lived there in the 1950s as well as anarchist and guru, Harry Hooten, while sculptor Robert Klippel had his studio in the stables in the 1950s. Modernist painter Sali Herman also lived nearby after emigrating from Europe in 1937.

Wyldefel Gardens ran into trouble in 1940 with the construction of the Captain Cook Graving Dock linking Garden Island (600m out in the harbour) to Potts Point. The waterfront house and boathouse off the eastern wing of the complex was Crowle's own and he had it dismantled and re-erected on Kurraba Point, where it remains, delightfully named *Once Upon a Time*. Work on Captain Cook Dock began in July 1940 with construction of large coffer dams. Between 2,500 and 4,000 workers were employed, working round the clock reclaiming 33 acres of harbour. The British Admiralty had requested such a dock in 1938 and the site was chosen because bombing of the Harbour Bridge might close off the upper harbour. The Dock (346m long, 47m wide and 16m deep) opened in March 1945.

WWII brought many dramatic changes to the whole Kings Cross area. The biggest wartime influence was the Americans from 1942 on, who gravitated to the Cross like everyone else. Black markets and night clubs proliferated; fashions changed to imitate or attract Americans (eg "Yank catchers" - ankle strap shoes); hamburgers and cokes arrived; prostitution increased. The US military rented many flats and old houses for clubs and apartments for personnel on R&R, often with girls attached. US servicemen had much more money than Australians and also had access to otherwise impossible-to-get PX items such as nylons, Lucky Strike and Camel cigarettes, chocolates and hard liquor. Many professional girls preferred the black servicemen (who had their own club, the *Booker T Washington*) and who generally paid twice as well.

Immediately before the road drops down to the Navy wharf, are some more traditional, stone buildings, which were until recently part of Naval Maritime Headquarters - there are plaques by the gate. The two houses in this complex are *Tarana* (1889), and the Italianate *Bomera* (1856), designed by J. F. Hilly with Queen Victoria-ish sphinxes on the front steps. These once grand homes of the McQuade family went through the usual decline into boarding houses, popular with young artists and writers. These included Jessica Anderson (novelist), Ross Campbell (journalist) and Justin O'Brien (artist). The houses also form a part of a setting in Patrick White's novel, *Voss* and were caught up in the Navy takeover of the area in 1942.

Return uphill to where Wylde Avenue merges into Macleay Street. At Challis Avenue, the walk crosses the Main Walk once more, so it would be possible to rejoin it at this point. If continuing on L2, walk up to the inaccurately named Rockwall Crescent and then further along Macleay and right into Manning Street.

Back up Wylde Avenue, a few older houses survive including *Chatsworth*, at No. 22, almost on the curve, designed in 1921 by J. A. Kothol on a former waterfront site and later converted by him into flats in 1936. Almost opposite is Number 17, the *Bolot Building* (1951), designed by Aaron M. Bolot in an outstanding example of the Post War International Style, curving with panoramic views.

Wylde Street curves around to become Macleay Street. *Jenner*, at 2 Macleay Street is an Italianate house built in 1867 for Lebbeus Hordern by Edmund Blacket. It too was owned by the Navy until they sold it in 1998. Cross the route of the **Main Walk** at Challis Avenue with its fine surviving terraces and, on the northern corner, the former Clune Galleries / Yellow House (see Main Walk).

Visit Rockwall Crescent (it's not a crescent!) to see the elegant Regency simplicity of architect John Verge's *Rockwall*, built in 1830-37 for civil engineer, John Busby. Busby engineered Sydney's water supply tunnel between Hyde Park and the Botany Swamps in now Centennial Park (see Loop Walk L3). The house was restored in recent years in connection with the nearby hotel project but is now privately owned. There are also fine terraces in this street, Numbers 2-14 built in 1890 and Numbers 16-20 in 1884. Actor Peter Finch and artist Donald Friend shared a flat here in the late 1930s.

After continuing along Macleay Street, turn right into Manning Street, noting Number 7, *Wychbury*, built in 1934 and designed by Emil Sodersten. Next door is another indication of the grandeur that once was Potts Point - *Tusculum*. Originally a simpler 1830-32 Georgian Regency design by John Verge, the upper verandah and other Victorian Italianate features were added by later architects and owners. Its first owner was merchant and grazier, Alexander Brodie Spark, but its first resident was Bishop Broughton, first Anglican Bishop of Australia. As the area's elegance was overwhelmed by twentieth century urban consolidation the grand houses were either demolished or converted to

other uses. Restored in 1988 after a career which variously included a hospital, hotel and even a Second World War U.S. Officers' Club, *Tusculum* is now occupied by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

Continue on down to and around Tusculum Street and turn left into Hughes Street, taking Orwell Lane alongside the Wayside Chapel to Orwell Street. Turn right and go down to Victoria Street.

Number 29 Hughes Streets is the Wayside Chapel, begun by Reverend Ted Noffs in 1964, to offer a responsive Christianity which was open to all. Its Crisis Centre opened in 1969 providing assistance, temporary housing and counseling to those in need. Take Orwell Lane through to Orwell Street. On the western corner, opposite Springfield Gardens, is the large Art Deco/Expressionist style former Minerva Theatre (now bearing the name 'Metro') designed by Bruce Dellett, Guy Crick, Bruce W. Furse and Dudley Ward in 1938. As a live theatre, its casts included Peter Finch, Neva Carr-Glynn, Ron Randall and many others. Writer-to-be, Charmian Clift worked there as a young usherette during WWII. Converted into a fashionable movie theatre in the 1950s, it became very live again with the long-running 1960s production of the archetypal hippy musical *Hair* as it did its utmost to challenge the theatrical conservatism of its time. Later it became a film sound stage and production centre for Kennedy-Miller Productions (used for mini series such as *The Dismissal* and movies like *Mad Max* and *Babe*). The Minerva was built on the site of the 1830s *Orwell House*. On the eastern corner of Orwell Lane is another deco building, which during WWII was the popular nightclub, *The Roosevelt*. One of its WWII patrons was the future Duke of Edinburgh. Further down the street, Dymphna Cusack managed a block of flats at Number 18 in the 1940s, providing material for her novel *Come in Spinner*, while writers Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw lived almost next door at Number 22, writing their novel, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* which managed to get banned during WWII. Today the former blocks of flats are mostly backpacker hostels.

Turn left into Victoria Street and follow it up to its intersection with Darlinghurst Road.

Victoria Street here has a modest cosmopolitanism with Victorian terraces, little stores, restaurants, bookshops, backpacker hostels and plane trees. It develops some elegance as it moves northwards, while to the south hotels and high-rise increase. The deco *Piccadilly Hotel*, designed in 1938 by Ancher and Prevost is a link to more bohemian days.

Connection Walk C1 Joins Loop Walk L2 at Butler Stairs.

However, the street's relative quietness belies its recent history. Across the street, Butlers Stairs, with its old Sydney look, has a memorial plaque to Mick Fowler; while on the eastern side, tiny No. 202 also has a plaque revealing it was the home of local identity and publisher of the newspaper, *NOW*, Juanita Neilson. These two sites are reminders that Victoria Street in the early 1970s was the scene of one of Sydney's most sustained and vicious development battles. Locals like Mick (who lived at Number 115 and camped on rooftops defying police and builders' assaults) and Juanita were joined by the Building Labourers Federation and other unions, and urban conservationists, using green bans, protests, site occupations, squatting and blockades to save the street from being completely redeveloped into high-rise. By 1974, frustrated developers, often with government support, were resorting to massive intimidation and force, launching assaults on squatter-held buildings. Neilson, who had come to be a strong supporter of the protests in her publication, disappeared without trace in July 1975. Arrests were eventually made, linked back with the developers, but her body was never found (see Loop Walk L10). In the end there was massive development on the Woolloomooloo escarpment, but most of the Victoria Street homes were retained in something like an original streetscape. For the residents, for Mick Fowler (who died in 1979), for the BLF and their allies, and for Juanita Neilson, surely this is their best monument.

Continue past the Victoria Street entrance to Kings Cross Station and turn left to the complex junction of roads and tunnels at the top of William Street. The junction was originally called Queens Cross in 1897 to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee but the name caused confusion with Queens Square near Hyde Park and eight years later (with a King on the throne) the name was changed. A chaotic junction almost from its beginning, it was not much improved by the 1916 widening of William Street. Opening the Kings Cross tunnel in 1975 was some improvement, but its cut and cover construction method ensuring that several Cross landmarks disappeared. Subsequently, the controversial Cross City Tunnel was opened underneath it all in 2005.

Before the tunnels came, great advertising signs; Australia's first fast food joint, the "always open" Hasty Tasty (first opened in the 1930s); and strip clubs like the Pink Pussy Cat, stood here to brassily announce that this was where Kings Cross started. Bayswater Road heads east passing at Kellett Street *The Mansions Hotel*, once a favourite watering hole for local identities like actor Chips Rafferty, or poet Christopher Brennan.

Turn left (northwards) along Darlinghurst Road, then right, down Roslyn Street to Ward Street.

North along Darlinghurst Road is pretty much the Cross full on – cosmopolitan, busy, lively, ambient, colourful and touristy; and seemingly forever associated with nightclubs, gambling, drugs, prostitution, sex-shops and strip joints, muggings and police corruption. WWII had Americanised the Cross to a great extent and this process exploded during the R&R days of the Vietnam War with free-spending US servicemen, price hikes, American-style restaurants and bars, the "girls" and US military police patrols. Today, tourists stay here in the thousands, though more in backpacker hostels than in the five star hotels - most of which have been converted to apartments in the last decade. Locals manage to live around the fringes but real estate prices and rents are high. Restaurants line the streets alongside the strip joints and souvenir shops, and everything jostles along in an area which still manages to offer more opportunities to alternately entertain or offend than most parts of Sydney. Keep an eye on the footpath for brass plaques and historical information about the Cross. At Number 99, at what is now the entrance to Kings Cross Station, poet Dame Mary Gilmore lived in a flat for almost 30 years, seeing the Bohemian age through almost to its end.

Opposite Roslyn Street was the site of the California Coffee Shop, opened in the 1930s by its American proprietor, Dick McGowan. McGowan introduced American style sandwiches to Australia and to regulars such as flyers Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm, and cartoonist Emile Mercier, who lived across the road. Also across the road for several decades from the '30s on, The Willow Cafe attracted writers while its neighbour, The Arabian Café, featured the artworks and activities of infamous local artist and witch, Rosaleen Norton. It also attracted gamblers to its upstairs balcony. Norton, with her occult and satanic interests, was well-known to the Cross arts community and to the less liberal local police who charged her with obscenity from time to time. Cartoonist Emile Mercier lived in a flat on the Roslyn Street corner, while artist William Dobell lived and worked in the attic of same building for some years – notice the tribute to him in the footpath. Almost next door, in Roslyn Street, Steele Rudd (Arthur Hoey Davis), creator of the *Dad and Dave* stories, had lived in a bed-sitter in the 1920s and 30s.

And so it went on. Small fairly cheap flats, proximity to the city, coffee shops (rare in the bland Sydney of the time) and a seedy and anything-goes reputation, bought aspiring young arty-types and adventurers flocking to the Cross from the 1920s and '30s onwards, their numbers supplemented by often liberally-minded migrants and refugees from the troubles of pre-WWII Europe. From then until the 1960s it was Australia's Bohemia, with dozens of writers, painters, actors, musicians, intellectuals, socialists, drop-outs and hangers-on crowding into tiny, smoke-filled flats and coffee shops. Kings Cross was a living who's who of the artists of the present and future. An apprenticeship spent here was one of the essential badges of artistic courage. It even had its own crowned Queen of Bohemia, Dulcie Deamer - novelist, journalist and playwright - who moved to the area after separating from husband in 1922.

The Vietnam War began a process of change very evident today, but at least one tiny opportunity remains (for the moment) to revisit that lost world. Down Roslyn Street, on the northern side just before Ward Avenue, the tiny *Piccolo Bar*, little altered from the 1950s, still serves excellent coffee and conversation if you can fit into it.

Turn left into Ward Avenue and continue until reaching the rear of Fitzroy Gardens on the left. Cross the Gardens back to Darlinghurst Road-Macleay Street.

Ward Street leads to the back of Fitzroy Gardens, with its dandelion-like El Alamein Fountain (1961), the work of architect-artist, Bob Woodward. The Gardens were created by Council from the 1930s onwards from land acquisitions, the last being the enormous and elaborate house 1860s *Maramanah*, demolished in 1954. The fashionable home of the musical Hollander family in the first half of the twentieth century, *Maramanah* attracted visitors such as Dame Clara Butt and Dame Nellie Melba, all of them described in Robin Eakin's book, *Aunts Up the Cross*. Another earlier stately home was *Cheverells*. It became flats in the 1940s and its occupants included future Prime Minister, Billy McMahon and flyers P.G. Taylor and Jimmy Mollison. The site became the circular *Gazebo Hotel*, which has since completed the transition into apartments.

Turn right (northwards) along Macleay Street, then right down Greenknowe Avenue, then cutting left into Onslow Avenue to rejoin the main walk at Elizabeth Bay House.

Here Darlinghurst Road stretches back to the left but also curves to the right around the park to change character and name to Macleay Street. Across the street, the interesting mix of buildings includes the Art Deco flats, *Cahors* (Number 117), built in 1938. Further north, Clays (now Maclays) bookshop, has been something of an institution since 1954.

Next to the park on the eastern side is the rebuilt former *Rex Hotel* opened in the mid-50's as an American-style sophisticated top entertainment spot with espresso bar and cocktail bar. Across the road The *Chevron* opened a few

years later with the Silver Spade Nightclub and Golden Grill Restaurant to outdo the *Rex*. The *Rex*'s site now includes apartments occupied in the 1930s by Lord Nuffield and in the 1940s by the musical Menuhin family (including Yehudi and Hepzibah). Further down the street (number 40), now the Astor Macleay Apartments, was the Sheraton Hotel, where hysteria blocked the street for long periods in June, 1964 while the Beatles stayed there on the eighth floor.

At the Greenknowe Street corner (Number 48 Macleay), stands the handsome *Kingsclere*, the first high rise apartment block on the street, completed in 1912 by architects Halligan and Wilton. It was a forerunner of Sydney's highrise revolution, designed for the well-to-do, with elegant two-balcony, two-bathroom apartments and automatic lifts - which were a something of a wonder at the time. Modern powered lifts (or elevators) dated from the developments of the American Otis family and Von Siemens in Germany as late as the 1880s and their use in residential buildings was even more recent, but once they gained public acceptance they allowed the development of the high rise building which revolutionised the life and appearance of the twentieth century city.

Further down Greenknowe, Number 15-17 is the site of the former Aquatic Club. On the 27 May, 1971, actor Chips Rafferty, constant portrayer of the stereotypical Australian bloke from the bush, collapsed and died on the footpath outside while walking back from lunch with the American comedian Jerry Lewis at the Journalists' Club.

From here the **Main Walk** can be joined in Onslow Avenue, but there is a further **option**, which could also be picked up from the main walk after *Elizabeth Bay House* and *Boomerang*.

A little way east, Greenknowe morphs into Elizabeth Bay Road and about 100m along it suddenly opens into the wonderful common-like space of Macleay Reserve. The space is surrounded by a range of buildings that could serve as the Australian museum of multiple-occupancy architectural styles. There's Federation/Queen Anne (*Keudeau*, at the beginning); Victorian Gothic (*Aringa*, opposite); Anglo-Dutch (*Cheddington*, Number 63 - 3 storey flats, something more like 1920s Georgian revival with Spanish influence, the architect being Emil Sodersten); Victorian Italianate (Numbers 86-88); Victorian Second Empire (*Ashton*, Number 102, with its minuscule widow's walk); interwar Art Deco with skyscraper Gothic tendencies (the wonderful *Adereham Hall*, Number 71 - nicknamed by its inhabitants 'Gotham City'); severe interwar functionalist/P&O modern (*Ashdown*, Number 96 - 7 storeys, 36 flats plus 3 penthouses 30 car basement parking - its architect being Aaron M. Bolot); Mediterranean (*Beverley Hall*, down tiny Elizabeth Bay Crescent); and Spanish Mission (*Beuna Vista*, also down Elizabeth Bay Crescent, as well as Number 81 Elizabeth Bay Road); modern, international style boxy blocks, the best being *Toft Monks* (Number 95) and *International Lodge* (Number 100); and at the far end the visually satisfying organic curves of the late-twentieth century modern tower of *Deepdene* (Number 110). The dull flats next door to it (Numbers 106-108) stand at the former entrance to J.C. Williamson's "Tudor".

Some of the names reflect earlier lost mansions but two, both stone regency-style, survive. *Tresco* at Number 97, designed and built as his own home by architect Colonel Thomas Rowe is now owned by the Navy as an Admiral's residence. Number 93, together with its gatehouse, was *Kincoppal*, home of merchant John Hughes and family. Built in 1870 and designed by John Sharkey, it was the second house in the area after *Elizabeth Bay House* (the stables of which were once nearby). *Kincoppal* was named for a horse-head shaped rock on the Rushcutters Bay shoreline (Kincoppal being "horse's head" in Erse). The wealthy Hughes, who was a generous supporter of the Catholic Church, had daughters for a time at a school conducted by the Order of the Sacred Heart near Paris. The order was later established in Australia partly as a result of a suggestion to the Pope by two of his daughters - both of whom subsequently joined the order. The house was left to the Order who established a school here, retaining the houses' original name. In 1970 the school moved to the Convent above Rose Bay, met in Section 3 of the Main Walk (and at Loop 7). The house and its stables survive while the garden was redeveloped with home units in 1979.