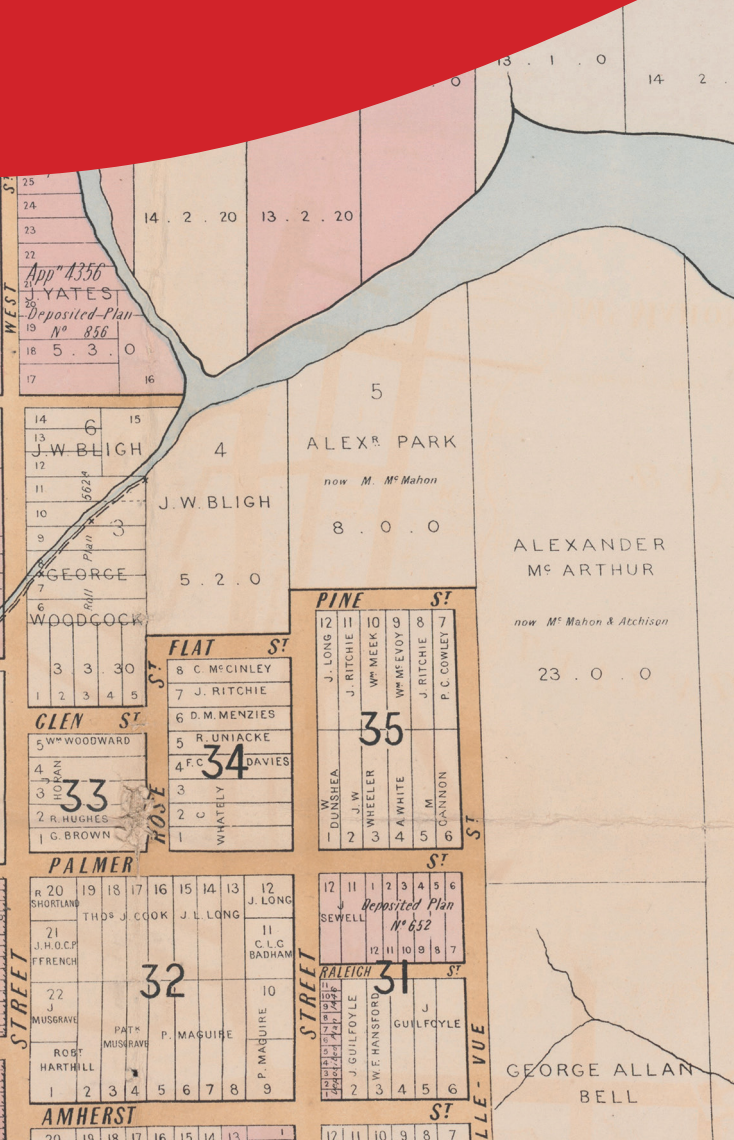# North Sydney History Walks

Cammeray

North Sydney History Walks

North Sydney has a remarkable number of beautiful and interesting historical sites to visit, despite the many changes that affected the area in the 20th century and the ongoing pressure of development in more recent times.

These maps were created with the aim of introducing locals and visitors to the history of North Sydney, and in the belief that walking a landscape is the best way to get to know it. The focus is on architecture, even more than people and events, for buildings provide the most accessible means of interacting directly with the past. They survive where most other examples of 'material culture' from the past – steam trains, corsets and gaslights for example – do not. Looking at the design and detail of a building and understanding it in its environment can provide insights into how people lived, what they thought and how things have changed. Of course, knowing who lived there can also be fascinating.

These are 'circle walks' which will bring the walker back to, or near to, the point of departure. The closest public transport access points, bus, train or ferry, are indicated. Public toilets are also marked. Walkers are of course urged to cross roads at dedicated crossing points or otherwise take due care. Take water, sturdy shoes and sun-protection. An indication of accessibility, degree of difficulty and length is given for each walk. North Sydney's hilly topography means that not all walks are entirely wheel chair or pram accessible. The presence of steps is also indicated.

These walks were researched and plotted by North Sydney Council Historian Dr Ian Hoskins with the assistance of Historical Services Staff. Susan Wade of the North Shore Historical Society provided valuable suggestions. We also would like to acknowledge the work of Bill Orme and Graham Spindler in promoting walking in North Sydney, and thank Sydways for permission to use their maps.

For more information on North Sydney's history visit
the Heritage Centre, Level 1, Stanton Library,
234 Miller Street North Sydney, visit the website
www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au or email
localhistory@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Cammeray

Length: 3.5 kms

Difficulty: Medium to difficult. Includes bush track with steep inclines and steps. Bush tracks may be dangerous and impassable after heavy rain

Introduction:

The suburb of Cammeray takes its name from the Cammeraygal people whose territory stretched from the harbour perhaps as far north as Turramurra, the country of the Darramurragal. Their social structure was dramatically altered by the early 1800s and it is not clear how many people identified as Cammeraygal by the end of that century. The name Cammeray was being used by Europeans as early as 1886 when building lots on the 'Cammaray Estate' were offered for sale around present-day Middle Cove. In that year Cammeray Park, near here, was named and gazetted. Some sporting clubs adopted the name. In 1890 it was suggested, unsuccessfully, that the new municipality be called Cammeray rather than North Sydney. The name was not generally adopted for the present-day suburb until the 1920s.

This walk will help you explore the history of Cammeray as it developed from a place of market gardens into a modern suburb which retains much of the architectural character of the early-1900s.

1) 65 Bellevue Street

This house was built in 1911-12 by James Wormald. The Wormald family had lived in the North Sydney area since 1884 when William was listed as a builder in West Street. William Wormald and Sons was operating in 1890 and, by 1911, Henry and James were significant speculative builders and property owners in their own right. James Wormald was also referred to as an architect. No. 65 is in near original condition. It is an excellent example of the style and high quality of brick cottages that dominated Sydney's suburbs in the two decades after Federation in 1901. Sometimes called 'Federation-era' houses, their decorative celebration of a variety of building materials and skills was inspired by English Revival architecture of the late-19th century. Note, for instance, the tiles on the front steps. By the 1920s this house was named 'Mindaribba', after a small locality in the Hunter Valley.

2) Site of former creek and Chinese market gardens

An un-named Y-shaped creek once existed behind these houses between Amherst and Lumsden Streets. It flowed downhill to meet Willoughby Falls Creek which itself flowed to Willoughby Bay (once called Long Bay), roughly along the route of present-day Cammeray Road. It was probably the presence of freshwater, relative isolation and low-rent that attracted Chinese market gardeners here between 1887 and 1907. They cultivated some 10 acres of land on the eastern side of Bellevue Street. North Sydney Council archives list at least four men who worked and lived here: Ah Gow, Ah Kee, Ah Pow and Ah Fong. Produce was sold door-to-door carrying baskets suspended on each end of a shoulder yoke. Dairyman George Bell owned much of the land. Cultivation ended when 'Bells Estate' subdivision was put on the market in 1907 and houses constructed.

3) 69-71 Palmer Street

Corner sites were the typical location for local shops in the 19th century. A butcher, baker, grocer and fruiterer might occupy all four corners of a junction. With the spread of the tram network in the early 1900s long lines of shops were built along roads, so-called shopping strips. The shops along Miller Street, Cammeray, which were serviced by a tramline are an example. This corner grocery shop was built in 1933 apparently to compete with the main shops one block away. It was the middle of the Great Depression which may explain the rather plain façade. Despite the hard times Stanley Young rented and ran the store throughout the 1930s, probably with the help of his wife Violet.

4) Cammeray Public School

Cammeray Public was first called Suspension Bridge Public School. Its construction reflected the expansion in public education under Peter Board, NSW Director of Public Instruction, and the State's first Labor Party Government. The school was opened by the Premier William Holman in March 1915. He was joined by May Larkin, the wife of the local Labor Party member Ted Larkin, who raised a Union Jack flag. Ted had just left to serve in World War One and was killed shortly after at the first Gallipoli landing on 25 April 1915. The school featured in political and public debates about infrastructure spending versus the need to balance budgets. Previously local children travelled to Naremburn or Neutral Bay for schooling.

5) 113 Bellevue Street

This Victorian cottage was built in 1893-94. The two-toned or 'polychromatic' bricks are original. The symmetrical frontage shows the influence of earlier Georgian-style architecture. The land was offered for sale in 1889 and promoted as being 'easy of access from the city', although the nearest tram to the ferries was a kilometre away at the corner of Miller and Ridge Streets.

6) 123 Bellevue Street

This tiny timber house was listed as a stables in 1892 and a three room house and stables soon after.

7) Pine Street Substation

This 1915 substation was one of several built across Sydney from 1904 to distribute electricity from the Municipal Council of Sydney's Pyrmont Power Station to suburbs spreading across the city. Prior to that North Sydney residents relied upon coal gas for street lighting. Though unstaffed and functional, each substation was designed individually with great care in recognition that they had a visual impact. Designed to look like a castle, this substation was inspired by the nearby Bridge. Others featured Arts and Crafts elements. Those built before the 1920s owed a debt to the influence of the Government Architect Walter Liberty Vernon who introduced English Revival styles to public buildings across Sydney. Vernon lived in Neutral Bay from 1885 to the 1890s and was an alderman on Council. Vernon Street, Cammeray, is probably named after him. This structure is now a private residence.

8) Suspension Bridge

This is the extraordinary bridge and landmark that gave the local area its name to the 1920s. The Sydney Investment and Tramway Company completed it in 1892 as part of a real estate project which offered housing lots and easy tram travel to and from North Sydney. The company was bankrupted in the depression of the 1890s, although 165 lots on the so-called Bridge Estate, north from Carter Street, were offered for sale in 1902. The stone for the bridge came from Middle Harbour. The structure was originally a suspension bridge with wires providing structural support from the pylons. In 1939 it was converted to a platform bridge because of structural weakness but the name Suspension Bridge remained. Trams travelled to its southern end from 1909 and across to Northbridge in 1914. The tram service ended in 1948.

9) 5 The Boulevarde

This land was part of the 1902 Bridge Estate subdivision but appears to have remained vacant until 1938 when Emanuel Simms commissioned architect Ernest Maxwell Osborn to design one of the earliest and best examples of an Inter-war Functionalist house in Sydney. Osborn took advantage of the sloping rocky site to create a striking mass of brick, concrete and stone. The curved front with its large steel frame picture window turned the living room into a viewing platform. The façade, flat roof and room layout is very different to the houses of earlier decades, as is the relationship to the landscape. Osborn drew upon European Modernism which emphasized undecorated functional design as a means of creating efficient yet attractive homes for modern mass society. The streamlined curves also suggested the excitement and movement of modern times. In 1939, the Simms House was an impactful addition to the landscape. By the 1970s the area had filled with Modernist houses of varying designs and the Simms House seemed a little less unusual.

10) 1a/1b Rowlison Parade

Architect William Page designed this residence in 1959 for Mr and Mrs Voisey. It was built the following year. Its angles contrast with the rounded façade of the Simms House yet both are examples of Modernism as they eschew decorativeness and historical elements such as half-timbered gables. Each are adapted to their sloping sites and, importantly, both houses take advantage of the resulting views with the inclusion of large windows, something that was rarely done in earlier houses. A second storey was added and the area beneath the living area enclosed in 2021. Pale brick indicates the original structure.

11) Judith Ambler Reserve

Judith Ambler lived in nearby Vernon Street. An architect, she served on North Sydney Council from 1971 to 1974 as part of a 'new breed' of councillors who responded to concerns about over-development. Ambler was one of several women elected to the male-dominated Council in the 1970s and 1980s. This park was named in her honour after she died in 2005.

12) Tunks Park, Flat Rock Gully and bushland

This space was originally a tidal flat and creek. Cammeraygal people may have collected shellfish, such as mud oysters, here and accessed freshwater. Work to fill in the flat and

creek to create a park began in 1937. It was named Tunks Park after William Tunks, the longest serving Mayor of this area, then called St Leonards, from 1869 to 1883. Tunks was a staunch advocate of public parks. The creek and surrounds may already have been degraded when the park was created. The bushland, too, was impacted through the removal of endemic mammals. However, as North Sydney has only 5% of its original bush cover, this area is a vital haven for plants, birds and insects.

*Note re bush track: the track crosses the creek north to south on stepping stones. After heavy rain this may be difficult. Take extra care. Further along you will come to a section of the creek which has walled banks. This was an old bathing hole. The track divides here. Take the path up the hill on the left. After a short distance the track divides again quite clearly. Take the left hand track. Continue up hill. The track divides again before a small stone retaining wall. Take the left hand level track **not** the path that goes uphill. A short distance along again you will see the remains of Henry Dawson's House at the top of some stone steps. If not retrace your steps and follow the instructions again.*

13) Remains of Henry Dawson's house

Henry 'Fatty' Dawson operated a piggery here or nearby from the 1860s to the 1880s. These are the remains of his house and garden. Dawson Street, above, is named after him.

14) 30-32 Marks Street

These townhouses were designed by Kerr, Smith and Malone in 1980. They are a good example of what is often called the 'Sydney School'. The defining feature of this architectural style was the use of unfinished brick, concrete and sandstone with site sensitive design that accommodated slopes and retained existing trees. From the 1960s to the 1980s the 'School' flourished on the North Shore where such landscapes had survived earlier phases of development. Marks Street is named after Jacob Marks who owned 13 acres here in the late 19th century. Hamilton Lane follows the course of a large creek that once bisected Marks' property.

15) 12-38 Palmer Street bungalows

Despite the variety of non-original fences and additions, this line of bungalows gives a good impression of an inter-war Sydney suburban streetscape. No. 34, and probably several

others, was built by the prolific local speculative builder Henry Wormald in 1920. The house style is often called Californian Bungalow which is essentially a more horizontal version of the Federation-era bungalow that dominated North Sydney's streets before 1920. The popularity of the half-timbered gable, derived from English medieval architecture, was common to both Sydney and California.

16) Four Figs Park

The fig trees which gave rise to the name of this park were planted by Council in the 1930s when lower West Street was blocked off presumably because of the steep incline. The pocket park was created in the 1980s after local resident Patricia 'Paddy' Fullilove argued for a complete road closure for safety reasons.

## 17) Abbott Street and tram route

Abbott Street was the original tramway route for the North Sydney Investment and Tramway Company. Allotments along here, between Palmer and Miller Streets, were advertised for sale in 1892 just before the Company went bankrupt. The subsequent tramway did follow this route, leaving Miller Street at the top, turning right into Vale Street and re-joining Miller again to cross the bridge.

18) 44-48 Palmer Street

These houses were built by James Sadler Wormald, son of William and brother of Henry, in 1913. Nos 44 and 46 were nearly identical when built. No. 48 has a very unusual gable with chequered rather than striped timbering. The original names were *Kilcoy, Dundonald* and *Kinvarra*. The first two are Scottish placenames, the last is Irish. All evidence the strong Anglo-Celtic heritage of the area in the early 20th century.

19) 10 Abbott Street

This eight-storey block of flats was designed by Peter Duffield and Associates in 1970. The firm was responsible for a similar block in Munro Street, Berrys Bay, in 1974. The concrete frame and brick infill owe something to Harry Seidler's Blues Point Tower. Set on high ground, the building was a premonition of the development permitted in Council's *Cammeray Plan* of 1970. However, a local Resident Action Group, which included Judith Ambler, successfully opposed further implementation of the plan because it threatened Cammeray's existing character.
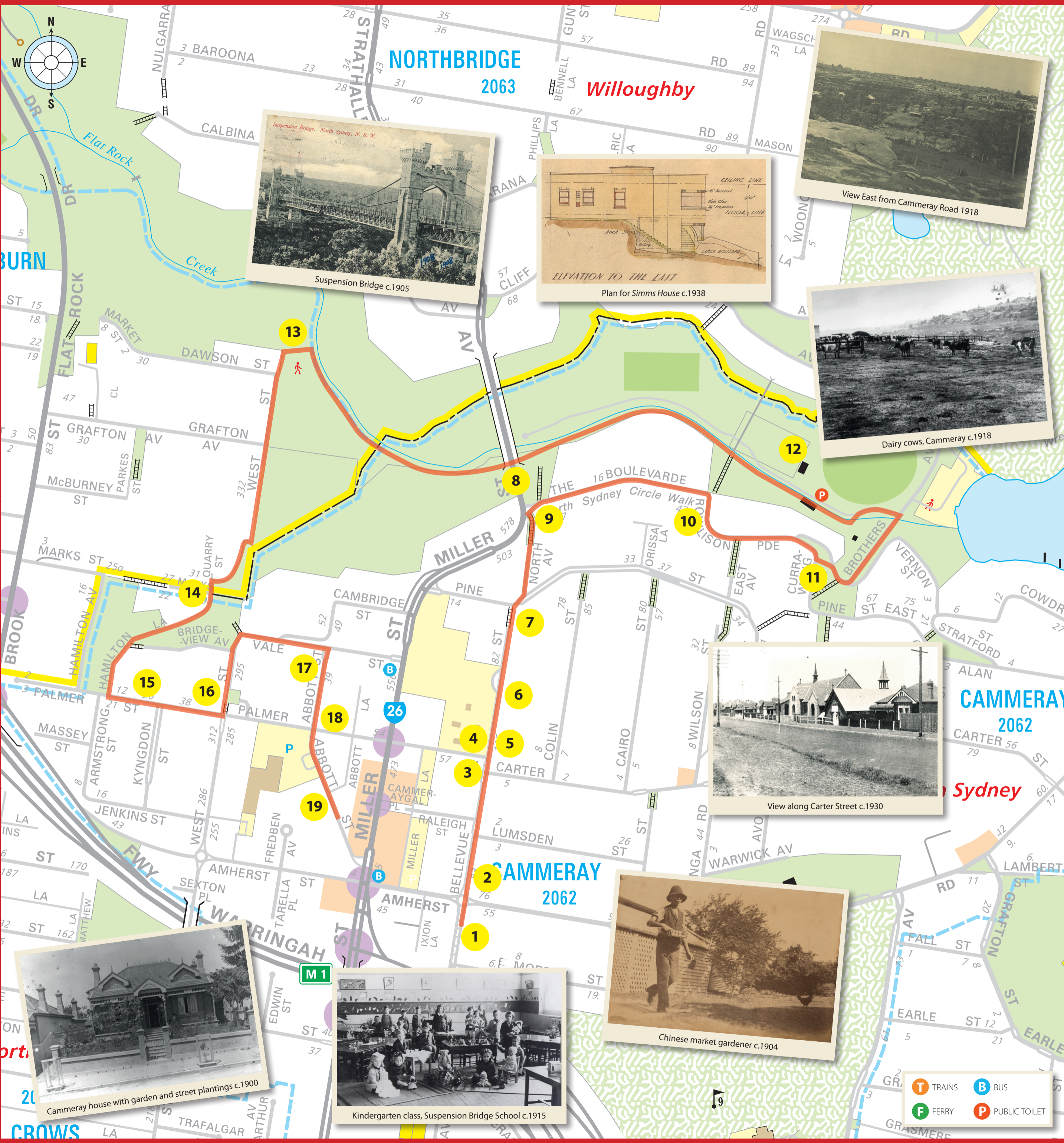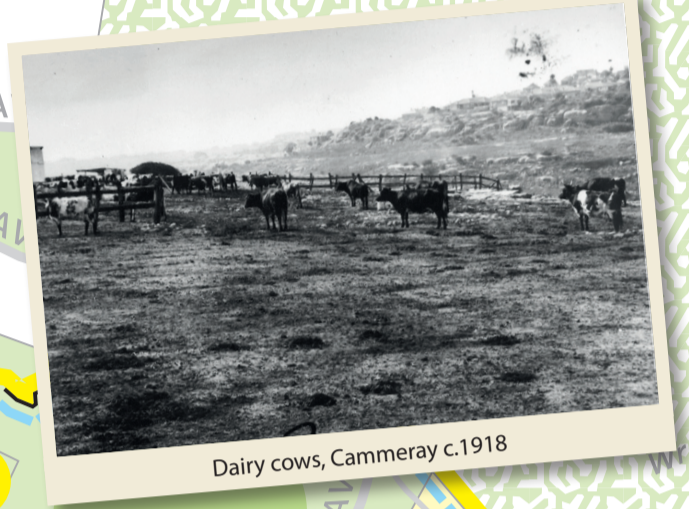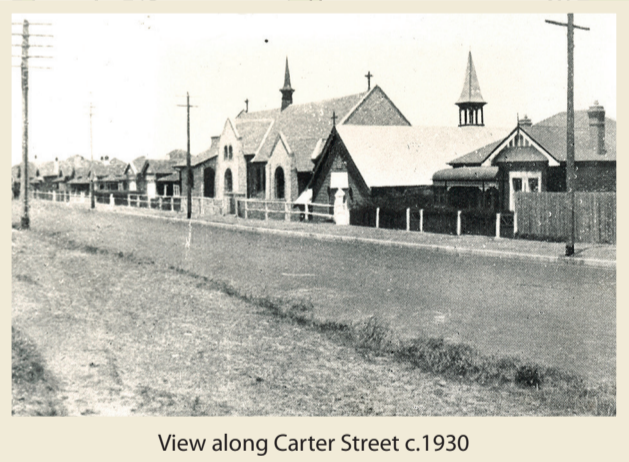
Suspension Bridge c.1905
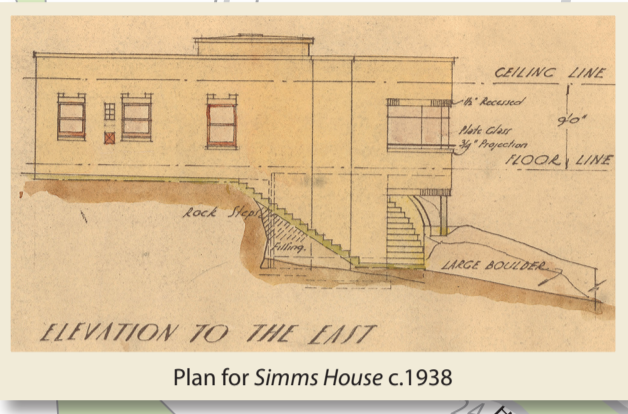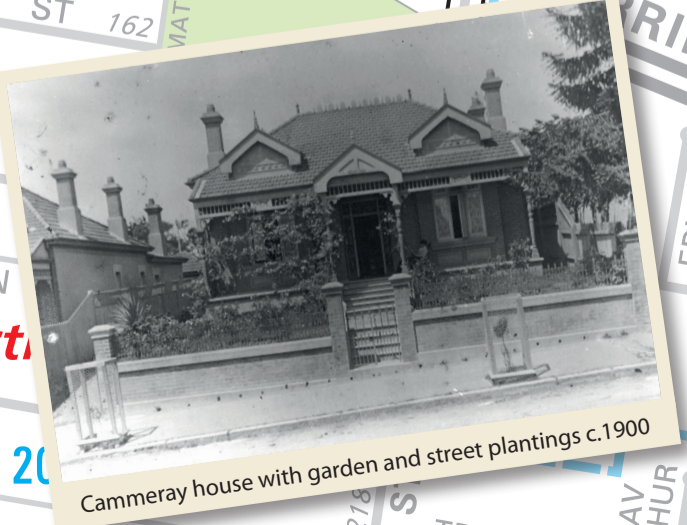

Plan for *Simms House* c.1938

View East from Cammeray Road 1918

Dairy cows, Cammeray c.1918

View along Carter Street c.1930

CAMMERAY
2062

Cammeray house with garden and street plantings c.1900

Kindergarten class, Suspension Bridge School c.1915

Chinese market gardener c.1904

	T	TRAINS	B	BUS
	F	FERRY	P	PUBLIC TOILET