

North Sydney History Walks

Kirribilli





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



Kirribilli

Length: 3.2 kms

Difficulty: Easy with some gradients

Introduction:

Kirribilli is an Aboriginal name. The point was a favourite fishing spot for the Cammeraygal people. From the mid-1800s it was one of Sydney's most desirable addresses. Kirribilli was home to several politicians in the critical Federation-era of the 1890s/1900s when Australia's colonies came together as a Commonwealth. It is still home to the Governor-General and the Prime Minister. In the 20th century, the area was transformed by the construction of apartment buildings. Some are among Sydney oldest and most interesting. While several significant properties have been lost, Kirribilli survived the development of the post-war years with much of its built heritage intact.

This walk will help you explore Kirribilli's many layers of history from stone dwellings to Art Deco apartments. The route takes in some of neighbouring Milsons Point.

1) 7-9 Broughton Street

St John the Baptist Church was opened in February 1884. It was designed by the sons of well-known church architect Edmund Blacket who died in 1883. The use of brick was part of the transition from stone and timber, however the unusual bell tower evokes the 'Carpenter Gothic' styling of rural timber churches. In 1904 enthusiastic bell ringing led to noise complaints to Council.

2) 16-18 and 33 Fitzroy Street

This pair of semi-detached Victorian sandstone houses was built in 1875. In 1912 the entire building became a private guest house, *Trelawney*, then a low-income boarding house. In 1974 it was bought by Council. Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre opened in 1977. The building thereby survived the development boom of the 1960s and 1970s, unlike the similarly-designed 1870s stone house *Ardross*, which sat opposite at No. 33 Fitzroy Street, demolished in 1961.

3) 44-50 and 34-42 Jeffrey Street

With common walls and small yards, terrace houses were the most space efficient dwellings of their day. The houses at Nos 44-50 are typical of the type that characterised

Sydney's crowded suburbs, including Paddington and Glebe. The buildings date to 1878 but the iron lace pattern was registered in 1870. The more unusual terraces along Nos 34-42 date to 1901. The bricks were originally unpainted. The natural colour can be seen on the chimneys.

4) Sydney Harbour Bridge

The Sydney Harbour Bridge dominates and defines the local landscape. Hundreds of buildings were demolished to make way for the pylons and arches between 1924 and 1932. The area beneath was once filled with streets and houses.

5) Waterfront boat harbour

The stone work visible on the waterfront are the remains of the small boat harbours built for the villas which once lined the foreshore.

6) Mary Booth Reserve

This was the site of a garden and cottage called *The Dingle*, reputedly built of metal salvaged from prefabricated British field accommodation in the Crimean War in the 1850s. It was commonly called the 'Iron House'. By 1871 *The Dingle* had its own underground water reservoir, wharf, boat-house, and bathing-house. It was demolished in 1939 but redevelopment was forestalled by the outbreak of war. In 1947 local resident, activist and teacher, Dr Mary Booth OBE lobbied to create a park here. The land was acquired by the State Government and given to North Sydney Council. The reserve was named in honour of Dr Booth in 1961.

7) 1 Waruda Street

Built in 1908, *Beulah Flats* was one of the first apartment buildings constructed on the Harbour. It had private sea baths beneath the ground floor. The building was renamed the *Astoria Flats* and from 1928 *Hotel Braeburn*. It became the *Miami Private Hotel* in the 1930s. Soldiers were billeted here during World War Two. Converted to a boarding house it was condemned as unsuitable for human habitation in 1975. The subsequent real estate boom prompted its conversion to luxury apartments.

8) 3 Waruda Avenue and 83 Kirribilli Avenue

In the 1920s and 1930s the southern part of Kirribilli rivalled east Sydney and Bondi for apartment buildings. Both these blocks exemplify the Interwar Art Deco style with its emphasis on geometric shapes and lines. The decorative

use of bricks was characteristic of this area. *Redlynn* was designed in 1939 and *Rydal* in 1940. Both were completed before building materials became scarce during World War Two. The original timber windows on *Rydal* have been replaced.

9) 101 and 103 Kirribilli Ave

Classicism became fashionable in the interwar period in 'Georgian Revival' architecture inspired often by the buildings of colonial Sydney. The apartment blocks at Nos 101 and 103 were originally called *Burrongang Flats* and *Warringa Flats* respectively. They were built in 1927 for the property developer Victor Nassoor, son of the former Turkish Consul in Sydney. The architect was William A Young. He also designed *The Regent* at No. 29 Waruda Street for Nassoor in 1926. When he died in 1929, aged only 45, Nassoor's property portfolio estate was valued at over £45,000, equivalent to around \$15 million dollars. All of it went to pay off his debts.

10) Admiralty House

Admiralty House was built as a wide stone bungalow for Colonel JGN Gibbes, Collector of Customs. The first name *Wotonga* may have referred to *Wudyong*, the Aboriginal name for the small point on the eastern foreshore. George Barney, designer of Fort Denison, bought the house in 1856. The Royal Navy acquired the property in 1885 as a residence for the Commodore of the Australia Station flotilla at Garden Island. Greatly enlarged it was renamed *Admiralty House*. In 1913, after the departure of the Royal Navy, it became a Commonwealth property for the use of the Governor-General.

11) Kirribilli House

Kirribilli House was built between 1854 and 1858 by the merchant Adolf Feez. It is a good example of the Gothic-style 'marine villas' that once dotted Sydney Harbour and formed a 'dress circle' at Kirribilli. In 1919 public opposition to the property's subdivision led to its purchase by the Commonwealth. Since 1956 it has been the Prime Minister's Sydney residence.

12) 31 Carabella Street

The first *Keston* was built by the 1870s. From 1904 to 1906 it was home to barrister and politician Richard Edward O'Connor, close friend and political ally of Edmund Barton. O'Connor and Barton co-founded the Australasian

Federation League of New South Wales in 1893 and co-authored the Constitution Bills before the Federation of Australian colonies in 1901. Barton lived nearby. In 1912-13 *Keston* was essentially rebuilt as a dwelling featuring a 'free-style' amalgamation of English design elements. Bought by the Commonwealth in 1953, it became the Sydney headquarters of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in the 1960s. *Keston* was restored as luxury apartments in the early 1990s. The extensive waterfront garden was subdivided for more dwellings.

13) 11 Holbrook Ave

Sunnyside was built about 1857 for Robert Hunt, Master of the Royal Mint. It was the first house on the site and is an excellent example of the Gothic-style marine villa. In 1905 Dugald Thomson took up residence there and renamed it *Wyreepi*. Thomson was the first member for North Sydney – the electorate created with Federation in 1901. The property once had a large private bathing enclosure on the waterfront. The house is again called *Sunnyside*.

14) Holbrook Avenue apartment buildings

The apartment buildings here were built on the garden of a two-storey sandstone house called *Holbrook*, built around 1875. The property was subdivided from 1913 to 1916. The house was demolished and replaced by the *Holbrook* and *Huntingdon* flats. The other blocks, *Brendalan*, *Mayfair*, *Renown*, *Tiverton*, *Walder* and *Warwick* were built by 1920. Well-appointed and beautifully detailed, they survive as excellent examples of some of Sydney's first apartments.

15) 67 Carabella Street

This is the site of Sir Edmund Barton's Sydney home from 1897 to 1906 - when he led the movement to Federation, co-drafted Australia's constitution, became Australia's first Prime Minister in 1901 and a High Court Judge in 1903. *Miandetta* was described as 'a great white house with windows wide on the stretching water and harbour islands, with broad verandahs... [inside] there is a kind of Eastern comfort, the luxury of heavy carpets and simple settees, and broad stairs leading to all kinds of quaint halls and anterooms stored with rooms and pictures'. Built in 1888, the house was renamed *Warinilla* after Barton left. Demolished in the early 1960s to make way for the Aaron Bolot-designed apartments, its destruction exemplifies the post-war disregard for built heritage.

16) 71 Carabella Street

Originally called *Brundah*, this dwelling was built in 1905 for JQ Wood, who named it after his wool and wheat property. It was designed by James Peddle in the popular Arts and Crafts style. In 1927 *Brundah* became home to Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, and former Queensland Premier, 'Red' Ted Theodore. He lived here until the mid-1930s.

17) 48 Carabella Street

Burnleigh was built in 1876-77 for Nicholas McBurney, wool-broker and alderman for the Borough of East St Leonards - later incorporated into North Sydney Council. *Burnleigh* stayed in the McBurney family until 1971 and thereby survived demolition and redevelopment as a rare example of a grand 19th century home in its original grounds.

18) 33-39 Willoughby Street

Amy Terrace was built in 1889. Among the first residents were an accountant, baker, engineer and master mariner. Ian Kiernan OAM, yachtsman and founder of the 'Clean Up Sydney Harbour', 'Clean Up Australia' and 'Clean Up the World' campaigns between 1989 and 1991, lived in No. 37 for many years before he died in 2018.

19) 78 McDougall Street

The *Ensemble Theatre* was established by American-born director Hayes Gordon in 1958. It moved to this former boatshed in 1960, one of the first examples of Sydney's transitioning 'working waterfront' and predating the transformation of Walsh Bay by 30 years. On its 60th anniversary in 2018 the *Ensemble* was Australia's longest continuously operating professional theatre. The company has also had a long association with director Sandra Bates and playwright David Williamson.

20) 76 McDougall Street

The *Sydney Flying Squadron* dates its first race to 1891 making it the oldest open boat club in Australia. Based for its first 50 years on the south side of the Harbour, it moved to this site in 1958. This had been the North Shore Rowing Club premises from 1879-1937.

21) McDougall Street jacaranda trees

Kirribilli's jacaranda trees attract thousands of sightseers each year when they flower in October and November. The avenue along McDougall Street was planted in 1940 using

trees donated by the City of Grafton where jacarandas were introduced for civic beautification in the late 19th century and a Jacaranda Festival celebrated since 1934.

22) Milson Park and Careening Cove

Aboriginal people called the tidal mud flat that once existed here *Weeyah Weeyah*. It probably provided mud oysters and other shellfish. The naval vessel HMS *Rainbow* was careened, or scraped, here in 1826 giving rise to the name *Careening Cove*. Like other tidal coves, it was degraded by the end of the 19th century. The area was filled in during the 1890s to create Milson Park, named after the Milson family who had owned much of the western foreshore.

23) 2 Hipwood Street

The house on the corner of Hipwood and McDougall streets was once a shop-dwelling. This was a quintessential 'corner store' serving the neighbourhood before supermarkets and cars transformed shopping. *Hipwood Terrace*, itself, was built in 1908. The current ironwork is not original; rather all the dwellings had timber balustrades and brackets. The brick façades were originally unpainted.

24) Greenway Flats

Greenway Flats were built between 1948 and 1954 by the New South Wales Housing Commission, itself established in 1942 to provide affordable public housing. As the largest apartment development in Australia it was a showcase project during the housing shortage following World War Two. Designed by the architects Morrow and Gordon, the four block units reflected the latest ideas in public housing from Europe and the USA. All the units had electric appliances and consequently the complex has its own substation. It is still public housing.

25) 35-42 Broughton Street

The Sydney Harbour Bridge resulted in the destruction of many buildings and the consequent construction of others. The *Kirribilli Hotel* took over the licence of *Dind's Hotel* demolished in Alfred Street. The *Kirribilli Hotel* was designed in 1937 by architects Justelius and Frederick for Tooheys Ltd. The simple streamlined form and flat roof owed much to European modernism.

SYDNEY

Bay

KURRABA POINT WHARF

NORTH SYDNEY WHARF

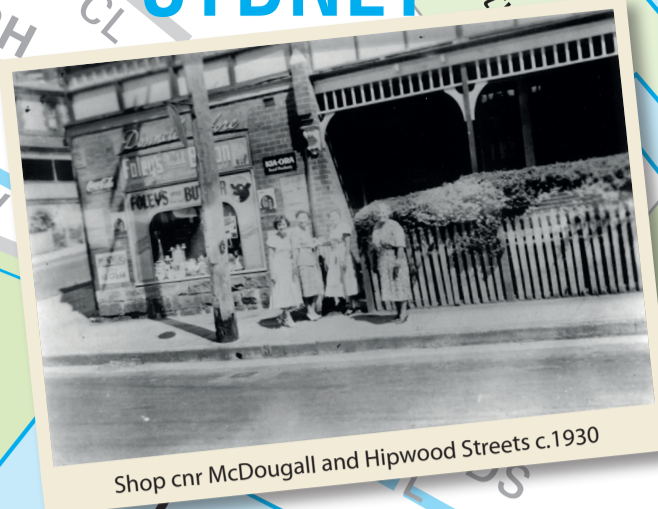
KIRRIBILLI WHARF

Careening Cove
Weeyuh Weeyuh

Wudyong Point

KIRRIBILLI
2061

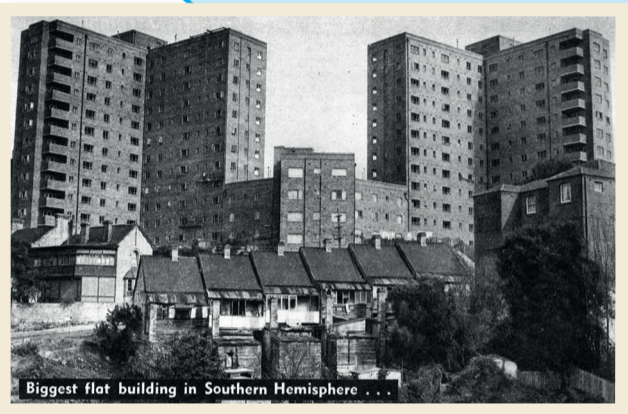
Kirribilli Point



Shop cnr McDougall and Hipwood Streets c.1930



Miandetta c.1901



Greenway Flats from Pix Magazine 1954



Address shortly before demolition 1958



Nos 34-42 Jeffrey Street, looking south c.1905



View along Fitzroy Street to Alfred Street. Albert Michell 1924. Demolished 1924 to 1930



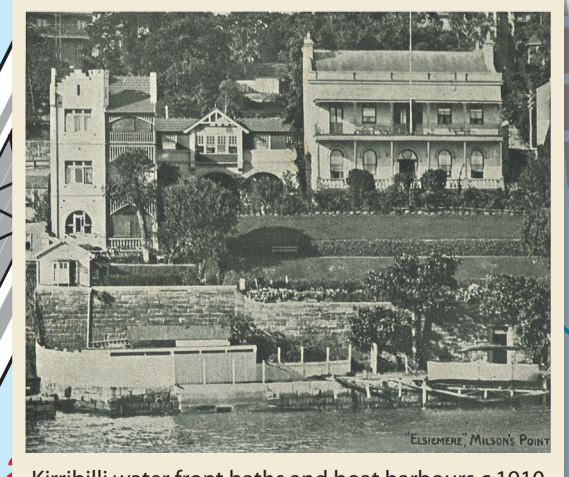
The Iron House, Kirribilli by Conrad Martens 1854



View up Carabella Street c.1905



Wotonga c.1880



Kirribilli water front baths and boat harbours c.1910

Milsons Point

- T TRAINS
- B BUS
- F FERRY
- P PUBLIC TOILET

