

North Sydney History Walks

Cremorne Point





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



Cremorne Point

Length: 2.5 kms

Difficulty: Easy. Includes steps

Introduction:

Aboriginal people called this point *Wulworra-jeong*. Middens around the foreshore suggest it was a popular place for eating shell fish. James Robertson was granted 86 acres [35 ha] here in 1833 but had occupied the area in the 1820s. James Milson bought the land in 1853 but failed to acquire the foreshore in the 1880s and 1890s. The peninsula was not developed until the early 1900s, and then for affluent Sydneysiders wanting fresh harbour air. Cremorne Point, as it was then known, became a showcase of the English Revival architecture so popular at the time.

This walk will help you explore that history while taking in some of the best views of Sydney Harbour.

1) Robertsons Point

This Point is named after James Robertson. A cairn of stones to mark his Scottish ancestry was placed here in 1988. The name Cremorne, after the London gardens, took hold with the establishment of pleasure grounds in the 1850s. Robertsons Point then came to refer to the tip of the peninsula. The navigation light was installed in 1910 by the Sydney Harbour Trust as part of an upgrade of the harbour's system of lights. Set back from the main channel its primary purpose was to guide ferries. The light first shone on 1 April 1910 using acetylene gas.

2) 8 Wulworra Avenue

This house and adjoining block of flats are an unusual example of a coinciding private and speculative development. The owner, Arthur Whetton, described himself as a 'landed proprietor' - a landlord. His two-storey house was built in 1911-13. He promptly erected a block of flats in his back garden. The house features a plaster ceiling patterned with lyrebirds and a large leadlight window in the stairwell depicting a couple becoming betrothed and wedded. The designer was probably prominent Sydney architect and local resident John Burcham Clamp. He certainly designed *Montana Flats* behind, completed in 1914. Both are English Revival-inspired designs. The detailing

of *Montana* has been obliterated by unsympathetic monochrome paintwork. Originally the bricks would have been unpainted and all other elements differently coloured. Clamp worked with Walter Burley Griffin on the first design, which was not realised. Once a part of Cremorne Road, Wulworra Avenue was so-named in the early 1930s. It refers to the Aboriginal name of the area.

3) **Cremorne Point Reserve and the 100 foot set back**

Cremorne Point Reserve is the best surviving example of the attempt by colonial authorities to retain 'unalienated', or un-granted, harbour-front land for public purposes such as wharfage or defence. An 1828 Government Order stipulated that a 100 foot [33 metre] setback be retained on remaining harbour foreshore. A court case in the 1890s determined that this setback was in place when this peninsular was formally granted to John Robertson. This consequently foiled plans by the then owner, James Milson, to acquire and subdivide the waterfront. The 100-foot strip of land around the entire peninsular became a public reserve in 1907 and vested with North Sydney Council.

4) **Lex and Ruby's Garden**

Shortly after they moved here in the late 1950s, Lex and Ruby Graham began to transform a neglected and much-abused section of Council-owned waterfront with plants sourced from many places. It is possibly the first example of 'guerrilla gardening', unauthorised gardening on public land, in North Sydney. In the 1970s Council assisted with the up-keep of the garden. Most of the work, however, was carried out by Lex and Ruby until their deaths in 1988 and 2009 respectively. It is still cared for by dedicated local residents. You can explore the pathways at your leisure.

5) **45 Wulworra Road**

Built in 1908-09, and named *Locksley*, this house retains the original finish characteristic of early 20th century homes, namely unpainted brick, 'rusticated' or rough cut stone, shingles and tiles. The combination of these with many and varied balconies, windows and gables epitomise the 'picturesque' aesthetic which underpinned this style of architecture. Variation and asymmetry were important. It might easily have been designed by John Burcham Clamp or at least influenced by his work.

6) 5 Green Street

The impressive dwelling to the left of the steps is in fact two houses joined together. John Burcham Clamp designed and built *The Laurels* in 1907. It is essentially the right hand section of this house. *The Laurels* was joined to a contemporary property in 1922-24. Unlike other architects who introduced English Revival elements in Sydney as British immigrants, Clamp was Sydney-born. He exemplifies, therefore, the colonial cultural attachment to Britain. Having lived much of his life here, and done so much to influence the character of Cremorne, Clamp died at *The Laurels* in 1931. As with *Montana*, the original detailing has been lost with the overall paintwork applied in recent times.

7) 6 Green Street

Carolayne is best appreciated from the steps leading up to Green Street. It was built in 1907-08 for John Burcham Clamp and was probably designed by him. It appears to have been an investment property as Clamp leased it out while residing in the *Laurels*. Clamp made full use of the English Revival/Arts and Crafts palette to include curves, turrets, numerous roof planes, small balconies and a variety of window sizes.

8) 4 Green Street

Narooma was built in 1927 for wealthy south coast timber mill owner, CC Mitchell. An example of a city investment property, it was named after Mitchell's home town. *Narooma* is thought to mean 'clear blue water' in the Aboriginal language of that area and, perhaps for that reason, appeared on other Sydney buildings. The prominence of the name and its already outdated Art Nouveau typeface distinguish an otherwise rather plain exterior. *Narooma* would have been more attractive when it retained its original timber windows, fence and garage doors. The double garage, squeezed into the unusually-shaped block, is an early example of design for privately-owned automobiles.

9) 83 Cremorne Road

The origins of the name of this block of eight flats, *Benvenue*, is intriguing. A Scottish mountain, it is also the name of a street in the settlement of St Leonards in Tasmania. St Leonards was the original name for the North Sydney area. More immediately, however, the building took its name

from the house it replaced. That dwelling was built in 1906 and first called *Curranmore*, a word of Irish origin. Builder Lewis Thomas bought *Curranmore* in 1919 and renamed it *Benvenue*. It was his family home until he demolished it in 1928 and replaced it with the present building. The investment paid off as the flats were fully occupied by 1930. The Thomas family moved elsewhere. It incorporates a variety of Continental features such as the loggia-like arches and is more reminiscent of an Italian villa. Almost certainly the castellated stone wall dates to the original house which was probably of an English Revival style, like most other Cremorne dwellings.

10) 60-62 Cremorne Road

This building is an interesting pair of English Revival-inspired semi-detached dwellings. In the late 19th century this form of housing was characterised by matching frontage, and decorated with filigree lace ironwork. The influence of the English Arts and Crafts movement, with its love of variation, has resulted in two very different fronts and a mix of materials – brick with detailing in stone, timber and decorative glass. The pair was built in 1914 for accountant Alexander Stanley King.

11) Sirius Street

Sirius Street is named after Great Sirius Cove, the original European name for Mosman Bay. That was so-named because HMS *Sirius*, the flagship of the First Fleet, was careened, or cleaned, there. The name Great Sirius Cove was still in use in the early 20th century. The street was named around 1914.

12) 83 Milson Road

This imposing building was built as a house between 1914 and 1916. As happened with many large North Sydney homes in the 1920s and 1930s, it was converted to flats - in this case in 1927. Thereafter it was called *Arranmore*, after an island off the coast of Donegal, Ireland. The present design is unusual, if indeed it is original to the house, because of the symmetry of layout with a central door and balconies. The massing of the form and the absence of timberwork also sets it apart from contemporary dwellings, although the half-timbered gable is very characteristic of the period. The carefully laid bricks have been tuck pointed to emphasize the bond or pattern. These walls are built in 'stretcher bond' in which only the long side of the brick is visible.

13) 96 Milson Road

This extraordinary building, originally called *Norit*, was erected for Sydney tailor Barnett Phillips in 1916. Master builder, and Cremorne resident, JA Hall, built the house for Phillips, an indication of the degree to which builders, even more than architects, influenced the appearance of suburbs. In the absence of an architect or correspondence between Hall and his client, it is difficult to know what inspired such a monolithic rendering of Arts and Crafts elements. Note the notional tower and the 'arrow loop' vent on the gable above, reminiscent of a fortified English manor. The name was changed to *Roseau* with a new owner in 1936. The front garden was subdivided to build the current flats in 1948.

14) 90-84 Milson Road

The four blocks of flats visible from the walking path just to the south of the steps from No. 96, were built between 1917 and 1930. The last and smallest was called *Nydfa* and was another of JA Hall's many projects. All are good examples of the boom in unit blocks in this area as the last of the Milson estate land was sold. Although apartment living was a modern social development these flats retained design elements of earlier English Revival and Arts and Crafts style architecture. The small windows and balconies reflect the limitations of building technology. Large picture windows were still 30 years away.

15) Rock overhang

The rock overhangs along this part of Cremorne Point may well have afforded shelter to Cammeraygal people who would have moved from place to place within their territory depending on the season and availability of food. Bark structures were also made quickly as needs arose.

16) 42 Milson Road

JA Hall built this house for Hugh Maccallum in 1912. The Director of a successful printing firm, Maccallum is best known as the man who helped to establish the nearby seawater pool that was named after him as a local institution. Maccallum's house has been altered since its construction but is still notable for the prominence of the wall-hung shingles, which are a characteristic of many waterfront houses in this part of Cremorne. Shingles became a feature of the general English Revival style,

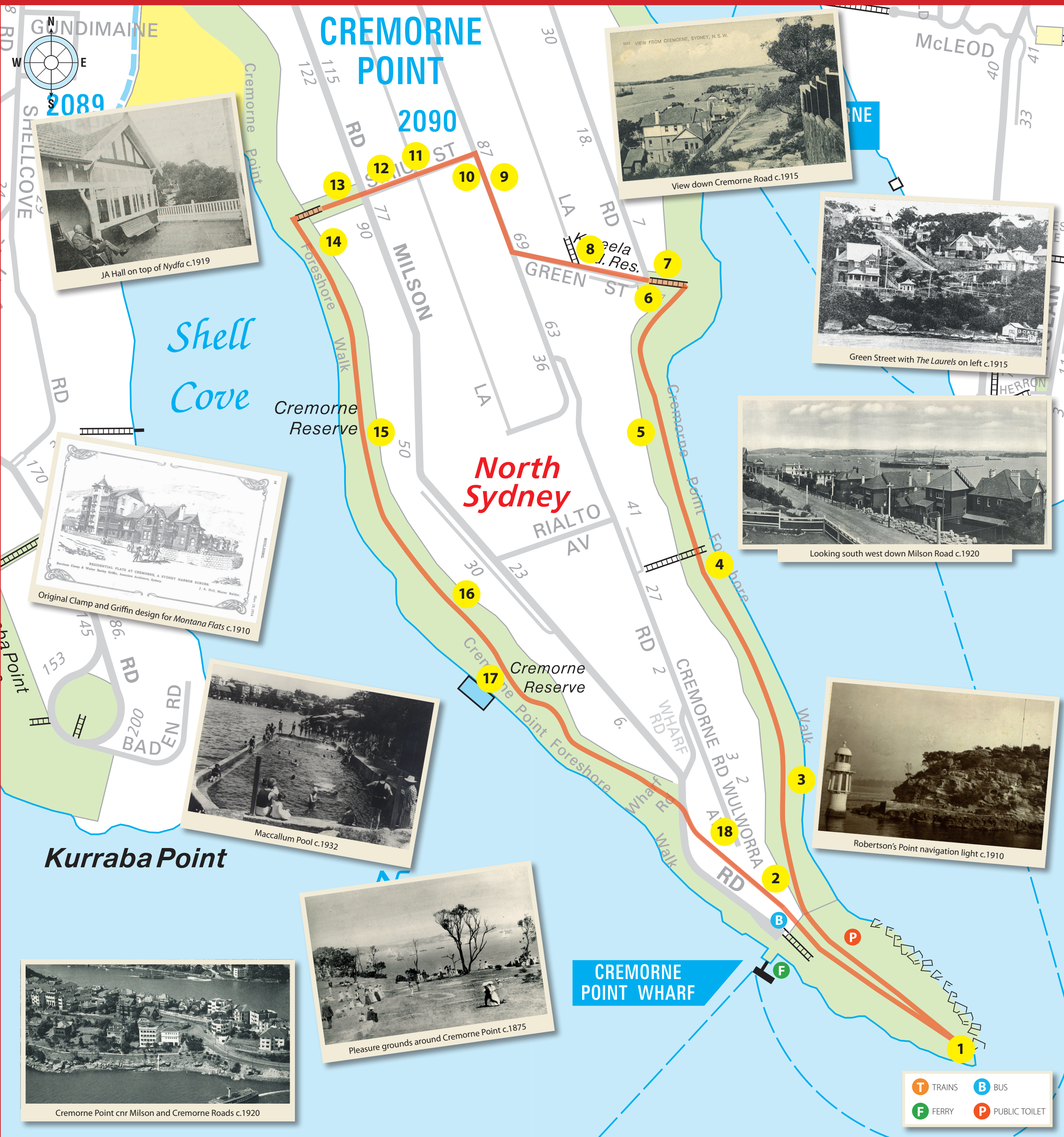
including Arts and Crafts, largely through the influence of American-born architect John Horbury Hunt. A resident of Sydney since the 1850s, Hunt apparently introduced this very North American expression of Arts and Crafts design in the later stages of his career.

17) Maccallum Pool

This harbour pool is the last of many public and private swimming enclosures that once dotted the North Sydney harbour front. It was the initiative of Milson Road resident and swimmer Frederick Lane who won the 200 metre freestyle race for Australia in the 1900 Paris Olympics. What began around 1915 as a tidal pool formed by boulders was improved through the 1920s. Hugh Maccallum was responsible for much of this work and for formalising membership of the pool to raise funds for upkeep and manage use. The pool was named in Hugh Maccallum's honour after North Sydney Council assumed control in 1930. It remained tidal until further improvements after World War Two.

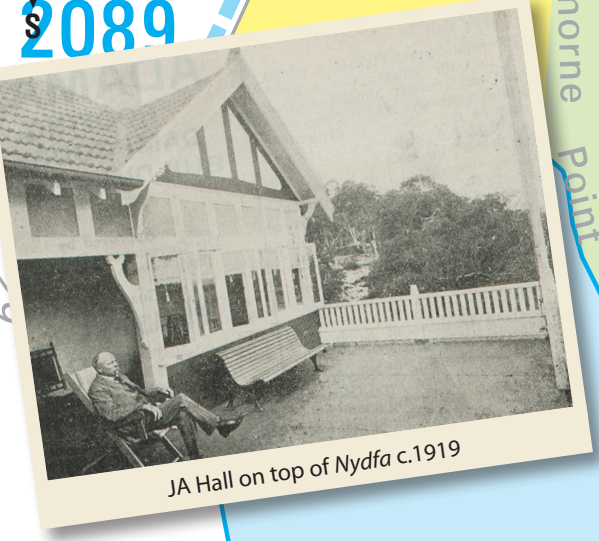
18) 3-5 Wulworra Avenue

These matching blocks of flats *Gloucester* and *Windsor* were built in 1939-1940. The names reflect the Imperial loyalty of many Australians, intensified at this time by World War Two. *Gloucester* is named after the Duke of Gloucester who visited Australia to a rapturous welcome in 1934. He became the Governor-General in 1945. *Windsor* is named after House of Windsor, the reigning British monarchs. The buildings are of a restrained Art Deco design with elaborate polychromatic brickwork.



CREMORNE POINT

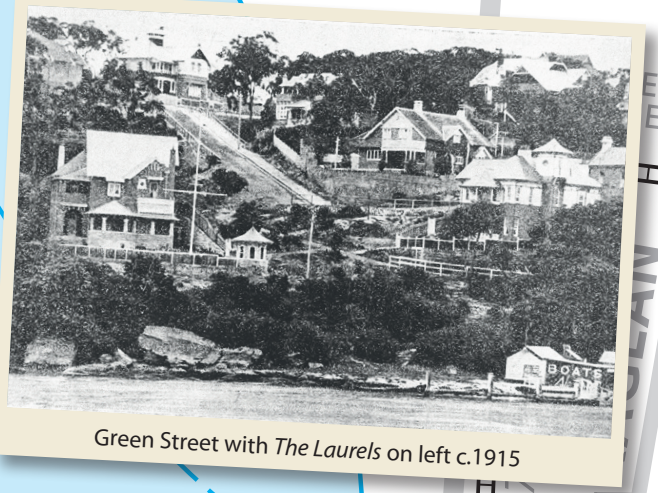
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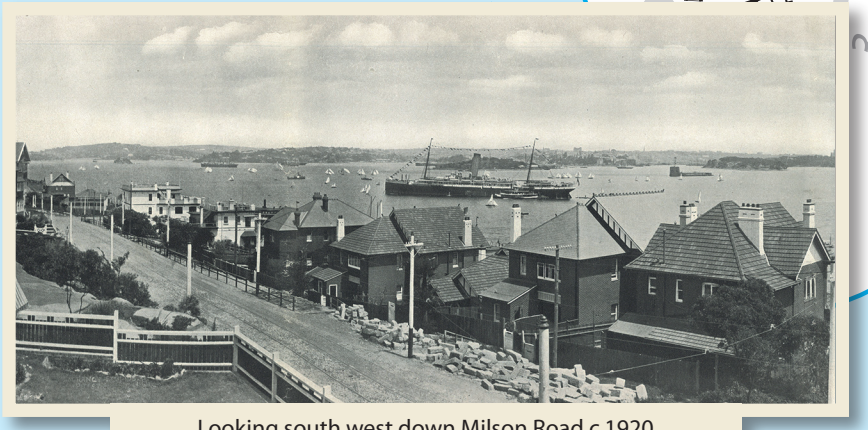
JA Hall on top of Nydfa c.1919



View down Cremorne Road c.1915



Green Street with The Laurels on left c.1915



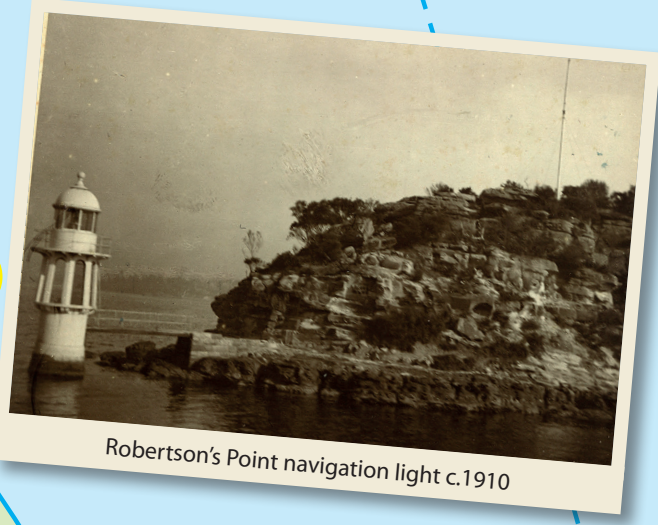
Looking south west down Milson Road c.1920



Original Clamp and Griffin design for Montana Flats c.1910



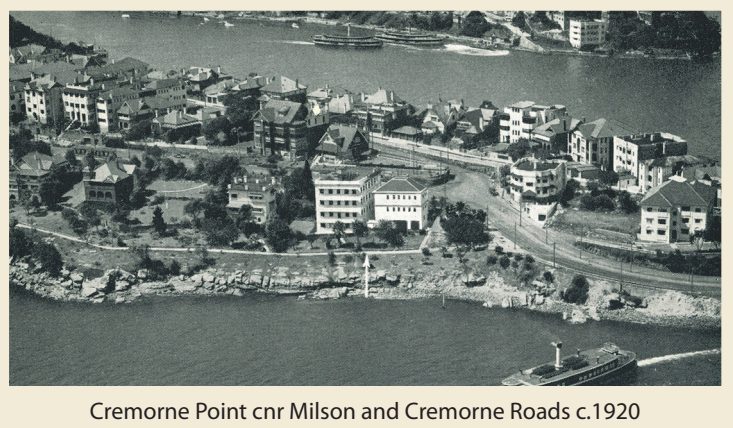
Maccallum Pool c.1932



Robertson's Point navigation light c.1910



Pleasure grounds around Cremorne Point c.1875



Cremorne Point c.1920

CREMORNE POINT WHARF

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