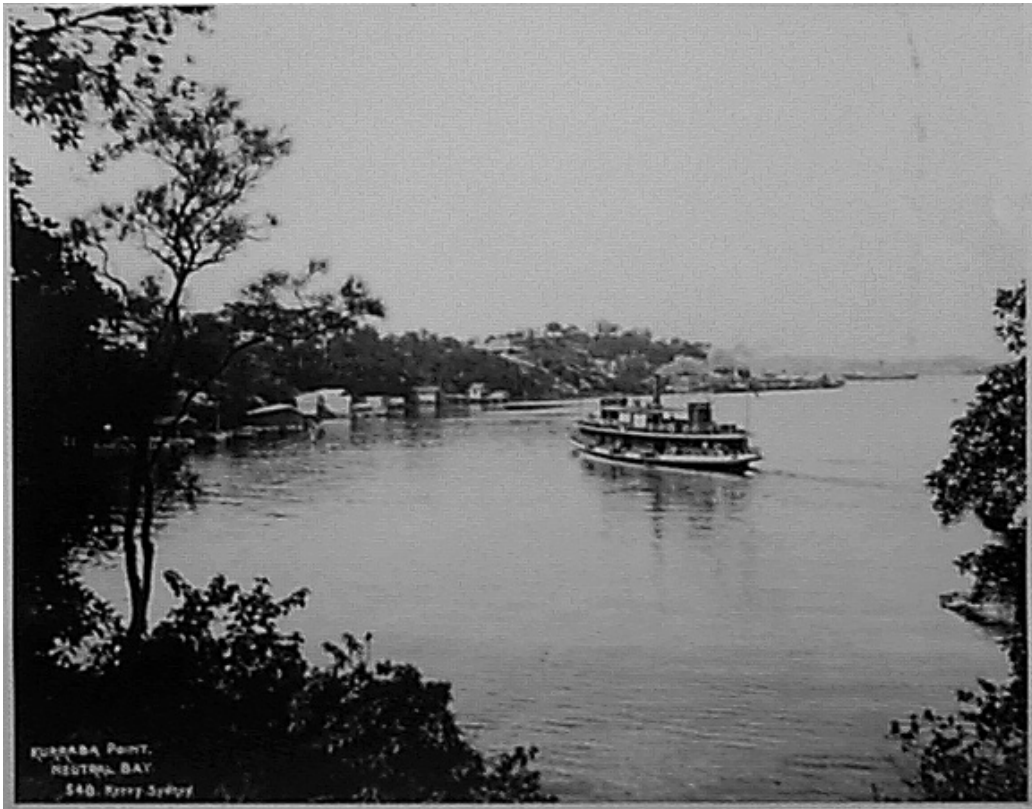


## Gem of the Harbour



*This walking tour will take you through the built environment of this unique foreshore landscape that includes fine examples of federation and inter-war houses, as well as apartment buildings, and former boarding houses, guesthouses and private hotels. Along the walk you will also view evidence of early industrial heritage and gain an insight into the history and development of the area.*

### **A Brief History of Kurraba Point**

Kurraba Point was originally named Ballast Point and formed part of Alfred Thrupp's Farm of 700 acres granted in 1814. Like many headlands on the Harbour, Kurraba Point was quarried in the early days of the colony to provide stone ballast for ships returning to England as well as to provide stone for building works in the Colony.

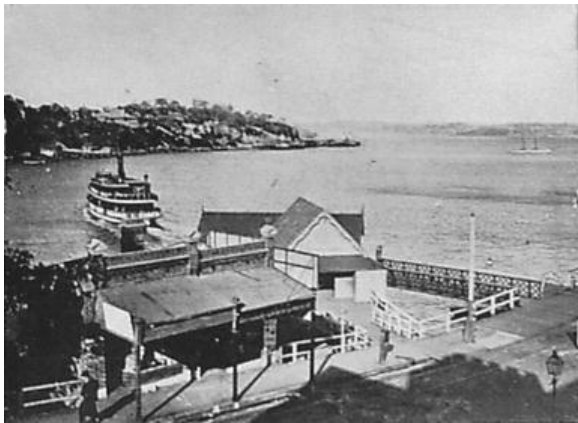
Daniel Cooper subsequently acquired Thrupp's Farm by the 1840s, and began to offer leaseholds in the 1850s and 1860s. At this time a small number of larger residences were built near the head of Neutral Bay and on Kurraba Point. The formation of roads through the Cooper Estate, the commencement of a regular ferry service in the 1870s and later tram services along Military Road from the 1880s and 1890s served to encourage the residential subdivision in the Neutral Bay/Kurraba Point locality.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Neutral Bay, including Kurraba Point was considered a popular suburb featuring attractive homes of the well-to-do. It was described in the Residential guide of Sydney and Suburbs (1915) as "a delightful watering suburb situated on the northern foreshores of Sydney Harbour, it is surrounded by undulating grassy lawns and gardens, connected with the City by an excellent ferry services from Circular Quay".

*Tour commences at the entrance to Hayes Street Wharf.*

## Hayes Street Wharf

Development of the Kurraba Point area and Neutral Bay was hampered in the early days by the lack of communication with Sydney Town. In 1864 prominent local residents met to organise the running of a steamer from Circular Quay via Milsons Point to Neutral Bay. However this proposal fell through and it was not until 1873 that the North Shore Ferry Co commenced operating a small steam yacht 'Florence' from Circular Quay to Mosman's Bay and calling at Neutral Bay near John F. Mann's residence fronting Thrupp's old cottage.



Sydney Ferries erected the present entrance to the Hayes Street Ferry Wharf in 1909. A bus service now operates to the wharf from Neutral Bay and Cremorne and replaces the former tram service.

The tram service commenced in June 1890 and continued until 1956. The tram terminus occupied a separate building alongside the ferry wharf and trams terminated on the deck of the tram jetty, with pedestrian access to the ferry service available by a short connecting bridge between the two jetties.

## Hayes Street and Thrupp's Cottage

Adjoining the present Hayes Street Wharf at the foot of Hayes Street was Alfred Thrupp's residence. Alfred Thrupp built the cottage on his 700-acre farm in 1826. G.V. F. Mann described it as a "four-roomed stone cottage". Not much is known of the tenants of

Thrupp's cottage until the 1860s, when the Mann family moved to Neutral Bay, but tenants from that time include Mr Berthon, Alexander Oliver (who later built *Shelcote*), H.E. Russell (afterwards the Chairman of the North Shore Ferry Company), Harry Jones, Sydney Robey, Captain St. George, Captain Minnett, F. L. Patridge. The cottage was demolished in the 1890s soon after the formation of Hayes Street when it was then named *Kerepunu*.

## Hayes Street

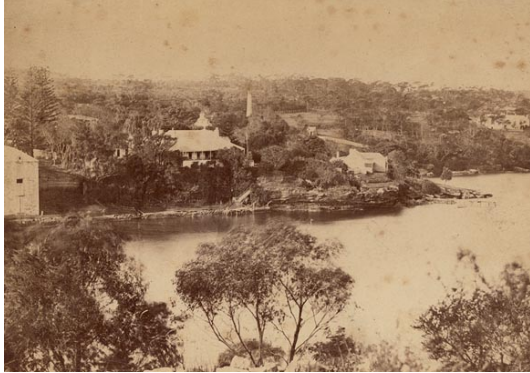
Hayes Street is named after Patrick Hayes, businessman and owner of the Oaks Steam Brick Works in Military Road, Neutral Bay near the Oaks waterhole (site of the present bus depot adjoining the Oaks Hotel). In 1885 he formed the Neutral Bay Ferry Company (only operated a short time) and he established a soap and oil factory at Kurraba Point in about 1874 (later occupied by the Port Jackson Steam Company ferry workshops). His house, called the "The Towers", was situated on Kurraba Point overlooking Neutral Bay and the Harbour.

## Craignathan and No. 2 Hayes Street

Opposite the Hayes Street Wharf at the head of Neutral Bay is the Hastings. This building occupies part of the land belonging to *Craignathan*. *Craignathan* was originally a large one-storey stone residence with attics and large cellars in the basement. James McLaren (after whom McLaren Street is named) built this house in 1831. The most famous occupant of the house was Benjamin Boyd who lived here from 1844 to 1849. Boyd erected a large stone building adjoining the house to the west (close to the foot of Ben Boyd Road) and a large dam for the purpose of wool washing at the corner of the present Manns Avenue and Hayes Street.

The property was purchased by William Davy who leased the residence to various tenants in the 1850s and early 1860s including Captain Merion Moriarty, Port-Master; Lady Mitchell, widow of Sir Thomas Mitchell

formerly Surveyor-General); and Alistair Maclean (Surveyor-General). John F Mann bought the property from Davy in 1869 and lived there till his death in 1890. Gertrude Bubb acquired *Craignathan* and *The Salisbury* from the Dodds in 1929. Part of the property was subdivided and *The Hastings* (otherwise known as the Salisbury) erected on the Hayes Street frontage adjoining *Craignathan*.



During the 1940s the house was used as a depot for the Sydney Volunteer Coastal and Harbour Patrol. The Australian Government purchased *Craignathan*, along with the Hastings building (which was used by the RAAF for accommodation). They demolished *Craignathan* itself in the late 1960s and built a car park on the site adjoining the Customs Depot at the bottom of Ben Boyd Road. There are some remains of the dam of *Craignathan* beneath the new apartment building adjoining the *Hastings*.

The *Hastings*, also formerly known as *The Salisbury* and *Milton* is the castellated building at 2 Hayes Street. It was built in 1914 for Mrs Winifred Dodds (wife of mining agent and local resident William Dodds). Mrs Dodds let both *Milton* and adjoining *Craignathan* to boardinghouse keepers. The lease of 2 Hayes Street was transferred to Gertrude Bubb (wife of Ernest Reinhardt Bubb, public accountant and Neutral Bay resident) in 1927 and maintained for the next 20 years as a boardinghouse. The property was eventually sold in 1954 to Augustine Thomas Regan (boardinghouse proprietor). In 1956 it was acquired from Regan by the Commonwealth of Australia and utilised as a RAAF Support Unit. The property was sold into private ownership in 1986 and additional apartment accommodation built.

## No. 4 Hayes Street

Next to the *Hastings* is this delightful interwar apartment building called *Kcot-Sedar*. The building comprises 9 flats and 2 garages and was built in 1927 for Adeline Gertrude MacDougall.

Between World War I and II numerous flat buildings were erected within a short walking distance of the ferry wharf.

*Continue walking along Hayes Street and turn left at Manns Avenue.*

## Manns Avenue

Named for John Frederick Mann, surveyor and explorer, who lived at *Craignathan* with his family in the 1870s. His son G.V.F.Mann wrote an early history of North Sydney, whilst another son Livingstone Frederick Mann lived at *Carthona*, formerly located at 4 Manns Avenue near the Kurraba Road corner.

## 9-11 Manns Avenue, Lansdowne

Note the large complex of somewhat run-down buildings on the Hayes Street/Manns Avenue intersection. From the 1920s *Lansdowne* was operated as a guest house offering "a commanding view of the Harbour, rights at Neutral Bay Wharf (10 minutes from Circular Quay), high-class accommodation, continuous hot water service, grass tennis court, ballroom" (Guest house Directory of N.S.W.), 24<sup>th</sup> ed.) In more recent times it has been operated as a low-income boarding house.

*Walk along Manns Avenue and cross over.*

## 10 Manns Avenue

Most recently operated as the *Elevera Private Hotel*, a boarding house for women only. Listed as a boarding house in the 1920s operated by Mrs Begg and owned by Winifred Dodds. *Elevera* appears to have been built around 1889 by Livingstone F. Mann, occupant of the adjoining *Carthona* (demolished for service station). The property was subdivided in 1921 to create several lots on the western side of Hayes Street between Kurraba Road and Manns Avenue.

*Continue to end of Manns Avenue and turn right into Kurraba Road at Service Station.*

The Service station occupies the former site of **Carthona**, Altantic Union Oil Co P/L applied to Council in 1958 to erect a service station on the site. The house was subsequently demolished. *Carthona* was the home of Livingstone Frederick Mann, one of two sons of John Frederick Mann of *Craignathan*. It was built in the 1890s. Livingstone penned "Early Neutral Bay" as a presentation to the Royal Australian Historical Society in the early 1930s in which he describes the area in the [18] sixties, seventies and eighties.

## **Kurraba Road**

Formerly called *Thrupps Point Road*, it was originally a rough dirt track cut through the bush and providing access to a small number of properties on Kurraba Point and above Shell Cove. Walter Liberty Vernon, Government Architect, a resident of the area and Alderman of the Borough of East St. Leonards was responsible for changing the name to *Kurraba Road*. The word "Karraba" or "Kurraba" is of Aboriginal derivation. The street is possibly named after a house of that name owned by Thomas Loxton in 1867.

*Walk along Kurraba Road and cross over Hayes Street.*

## **45-71 Kurraba Road**

A nice group of early Federation houses mostly erected between 1885 and 1906. Of particular note are *Wavertree* (65) and *Lanlyth* (55). The land on which this group of houses is erected was formed from the subdivision of *Clee Villa*, one of the earliest homes in Neutral Bay, formerly located in Lower Wycombe Road.

## **65 Kurraba Road**

*Wavertree* is the former home of Alexander McKnight. He was born in Liverpool, England in 1841 and commenced business there as an underwriter and marine insurance broker, and later travelled to New York and was involved in the shipment of cattle and chilled meat to Europe. He came to Australia in 1881 and worked initially as a salesman for Messrs Gilchrist, Watt and Co and in 1893 was appointed manager for New South Wales of the Mutual Life Company of New York. McKnight was mayor of North Sydney in 1893.

The house was built in 1885 on the site of Quist's smelting works. Hans Quist, a jeweller, resided at *Clee Villa* in Lower Wycombe Road and erected a furnace for gold smelting in the paddocks adjoining that house. According to G.V.F. Mann, "the furnace was of stone cut from the solid rock on the side of the road at the end of the present Ben Boyd road, and was moved to the site of the works by a team of eighteen bullocks, under the direction of Mr John Brown, a timber merchant, of Lane Cove Road...a large chimney was erected in connection with same". Apparently the venture was abandoned after a few years as a failure.

During McKnight's mayorship in 1893, he kindly offered *Wavertree* as the venue for the Neutral Bay Christmas Fete and Village Fair held to raise funds for St. Augustine's Church of England.

## **55 Kurraba Road**

*Lanlyth* was one of the earliest homes built in this section of Kurraba Road. Built about the same time as *Wavertree* (no. 65). Some early tenants of *Lanlyth* include Major Hunt Carew and Alexander Mayne.

*Continue along Kurraba Road and cross over Wycombe Road.*

## **No - no. Kurraba Road**

Note this interesting collection of federation houses between Wycombe Road and Billong Street erected on the Neutral Bay Land Company estate. Note the impressive Victorian Villa residence on the corner of Wycombe Road and Kurraba Road. This is one of the residences designed by Walter Liberty Vernon, Government Architect and resident of *Penshurst* (house formerly located to the north in present Penshurst Avenue). He was also a member of the Neutral Bay Land Company syndicate which promoted leaseholds in this vicinity in the late 1880s.

*Cross over to Billong Street and walk along to end. Turn left at Shellcove Road to Honda Road intersection.*

## **42 Shellcove Road**

Interwar georgian revival or Mediterranean style house built in 1923/34 for Miss Orrock by local builder J. G. Verills. The house was

sold to Robert Preston Gowing (proprietor of famous city store) and his wife Elisa Carlotta Lucia Gowing. Later owners were John Landon (bank inspector), Beryl Glen Pearce (retired publican) and Marie Wallington (publican).

## 55 Shellcove Road

Almost directly opposite 42 Shellcove Road is "Honda", the oldest surviving house in this part of Neutral Bay. Architect, Francis H. Grundy, built the house in 1858, which at that time was located in an isolated position at the head of Shell Cove and the nearest houses were "Shelcote" and "The Monastery", closer to the tip of Kurraba Point. From 1864 to his death in 1889 Honda was the home of William C. Bennett, Commissioner for Roads and Bridges. His daughter, Agnes, born here in 1872, was the second woman to gain a science degree at Sydney University. The property was used as a boarding house and eventually the property subdivided by the Irvine Family, in conjunction with Arden, an early house located nearby in Bogota Avenue, creating several building lots in Bogota Avenue and Shellcove Road. In more recent times the building was substantially gutted without Council approval and subsequently rebuilt and additional structures erected on the property.

*Continue walking along Shellcove Road.*

## 49 Shellcove Road

"An early Australian translation of the California Bungalow", "The Cobbles" was designed by noted architects, Peddle and Thorp in 1918 as the home of S. G. Thorp himself. This house shows the influence of Greene and Greene houses in California, which often employed cobblestones as in this Shellcove Road house. It is a low scale house, using natural materials such as the cobblestones mortared together on the outside of the tapering chimney and has exposed structural roof timbers and sits on a terraced garden slope.

"A pretty little nest that has long been admired at Kurraba Point, Neutral Bay, has a cobbled stone chimney and other cobbled features". (Building, 12 December 1926)

## 47 Shellcove Road

Delightful interwar georgian cottage designed by architects Waterhouse and Lake in 1920. It is believed that Professor Robert Irvine built this house for his ex-wife Florence after they separated due to his marital infidelities. Robert Irvine was the first professor of Economics at University of Sydney and later became a private consultant and author. Apparently one of the principal reasons for his dismissal from the University in 1922 was due to his marital infidelity. Professor Irvine and his family had lived at Honda from 1912.

## 41 and 43 Shellcove Road

A pair of 2-storey roughcast stuccoed brick houses in the federation arts and crafts style with unsympathetic alterations added in the 1970s. James Brown Craig, produce merchant, and Francis Brown Craig, medical practitioner, purchased adjoining properties in Shellcove Road from the Cooper Estate in 1911. Builder Charles Host lodged a building application to North Sydney Council to erect two houses in 1918. Shortly after building, number 43 was sold to Mrs Frances Plan who lived here until the 1930s, whilst number 41 was sold to a Mrs Myra Freeman then almost immediately to Mrs Linda Wright.

## 36 Shellcove Road

"Roun" is one of the earliest surviving houses on this eastern half of Kurraba Point. It was built in 1899 for George McGibbon as a single storey, eight-room house. Professor Walter Herbert Holme purchased the house as his home about 1911.

*Turn left at Gundimaine Avenue.*

## 39 Shellcove Road

In the island formed by Gundimaine Avenue is Gundimaine. According to architect Howard Tanner, "Gundimaine" is an imposing residential design in federation style by Spain & Rowe, made all the more prominent by occupying an island site". The house was built in 1902 on land owned by Elizabeth Brown Craig from barrister-at-law Gregory Wood, executor of Robert Hunt's estate (Honda). Various tenants occupied the house before brothers James Brown and Francis Brown Craig inherited it from their mother Elizabeth. The land surrounding the house was subdivided in 1923 and GUNDIMAINE AVENUE formed. Eventually in 1982, Gundimaine was restored and

extended to create four luxury strata apartments. The house features lovely art nouveau leadlight throughout and an overall asymmetrical design with a service wing and chimney elements.

### **37 Shellcove Road**

*St. Anne's* was built for Robert and Elizabeth Craig in 1908-09, around the time *Ailsa* next door was erected.

### **33 Shellcove Road**

*Ailsa* is an exceptionally fine example of the federation arts and crafts style of state heritage significance and which was described by architect Clive Lucas as "an extremely important house and one of the most avant grade houses of its day". The house was designed by noted architect B. J. Waterhouse in 1908 and was one of the first two buildings he designed after entering private practice. *Ailsa* was built for Captain Robert Craig.

Captain Robert Craig was born in Saltcoats in Ayrshire, Scotland in 1837. He was a pioneer captain and Marine Superintendent of the E. & A. Company. About 1885-86 he joined the produce merchant firm, H. Prescott, and he became senior partner in the firm following Henry Prescott's death. Captain Craig was also an active supporter of the Neutral Bay community and member of several social organisations, especially as an elder of the Neutral Bay Presbyterian Church, subscriber to the establishment of the Warringah Hall and petitioner for postal services in the district.

After his death in 1917 his two sons, James Brown Craig (partner in H. Prescott & Co.) and Dr. Francis Brown Craig (medical practitioner) inherited the property and subsequently subdivided it into seven lots between 1918 and 1920.

### **31 Shellcove Road**

*Brent Knowle* is a large federation arts and crafts style house designed by noted architect, B. J. Waterhouse in 1914. It was built for Major J. H. Evans Booker and cost a princely sum of £10000 to build at that time. The house was designed with servants areas, coach house and garage wing, on a sloping site with roofs pitched at 45°. Herbert E. Pratten bought the house about 1917. The house is named after a district near Bristol,

England where the Pratten Family came from.

### **29 Shellcove Road**

*Keynsham* was built in 1921 as the home of Herbert. E. Pratten and family. Herbert E. Pratten was a member of the Australian senate 1908-1928 and his son H. G. Pratten was an all-round sportsman who played in the N.S.W. cricket team in interstate matches before World War I, but his career was interrupted by World War I. H. G. Pratten also held the number 1 badge for the Sydney Cricket Ground for many years. The house was originally a single storey building designed by architect, Frank Buckle, a friend of the Pratten family and the second storey was added in the late 1920s. The house was named for a district near Bristol, England where the Pratten family came from.

### **17 Shellcove Road**

*Rycroft Hall* was built about 1919 by local Cremorne builders Helier and Percy Harbutt. They sold the property to grazier John Rycroft Colvin who in turn sold it to another grazier John William Luke. In the 1920s it was converted into flats.

### **13 Shellcove Road**

*St. Ange* is a federation arts and crafts house designed by noted architects Waterhouse and Lake in 1917 for William Arthur Chadwick, a land/engineering and mining surveyor. By the mid-1920s the house was described as two flats but still owned and occupied by William Chadwick. The National Trust states, "the house is a typical example of Waterhouse's individual interpretation of the English vernacular style. Each elevation is dominated by a shingle-clad gable with wide overhanging eaves. The walls are finished in rough cast stucco".

### **11 Shellcove Road**

*Englemere* is an interestingly detailed block of flats.

### **9 Shellcove Road**

Note the plaque erected on the fence outside this house in 2003. Coralie Clarke Rees and Leslie Rees occupied this house between 19 and 19.

## 7 Shellcove Road

*Dalray* was built in 1915/16 by J. Richardson and Son for Augustus Edmund Blair. The architect was Edwin R. Orchard.

## 4 Shellcove Road

*Casa Loma* is a 1930s Inter-war Mediterranean flats building relating well to the adjacent flats, "Casa Madrona", 168 Kurraba Road.

*Turn left into Kurraba Road.*

## 176 Kurraba Road

Barely visible these days as it is site behind the Kirrilee flats, *Gingie*, built in 1906, was for many years the home from about 1911 of Commander Staunton William Spain. Staunton Spain was born nearby at *Wallinga* in 1865 and later inherited that extensive property. He enjoyed a distinguished career in the naval reserve, served with the naval contingent to China, and in 1908 was appointed lieut-commander of the Royal Australian Reserve. Staunton was also a Notary Public and served as Marshall in the Admiralty Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. He also served as an alderman of the North Sydney Council 1925-1937 and was a member of the local League of Ancient Mariners. Sadly, he outlived his wife Ella Jessie. He died on 8 September 1946 after being struck by a city tram.

## 174 Kurraba Road

Like its neighbour *Gingie*, *Waione* is obscured from view from the street due to the flats built in front. This house was built in 1904 as the home of Colonel Alfred Spain. Alfred Spain was the brother of Staunton William (who incidentally lived next door at 176 Kurraba Road) and was born in 1868 at nearby *Wallinga*. He was a famous architect, articed to architect Thomas Rowe in 1884 and entered into partnership in the firm later known as Spain and Cosh. He was also active in the Taronga Park Zoo Trust, a foundation member of the Town Planning Association of N.S.W., board member of the Board of Fisheries, member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, N.S.W. Club and Australasian Pioneers Club as well as numerous other directorships. Spain also had a career in the Engineers Corps, commissioned as second lieutenant, 1<sup>st</sup> Field Company, Engineers, NSW Military Forces 200 Kurraba Road (1890) and promoted to

Major (Commonwealth Military Forces) 1903 and retired from service in 1913, but came out of retirement to serve in World War I. Alfred Spain died at Mosman in 1954.

*Continue along Kurraba Road.*

## 200 Kurraba Road

At the intersection of Kurraba Road and Baden Road is *The Churchill*, a block of 8 flats and 6 garages built on lot 29 of the Kurraba Point Estate for Ernest K. White.

Note the adjoining flats in Kurraba Road built about the same time as *The Churchill*.

*Continue along Kurraba Road to end of point and turn left into Baden Road.*

## 5-9 Baden Road

Named after *Baden House*, formerly located at 5 Baden Road. Sir Ernest White was originally from Gosford then later lived at Strathfield. He had served with distinction in the First World War and was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Military Cross. He was involved in the timber industry and had wharves and storage space in High Street. After World War I he founded the Australian American Association and the Liberal Democratic Party (the forerunner of the Liberal party). He was also involved in horse racing and after a large win at the races he was able to purchase the land on the tip of Kurraba Point. At that time there were only three houses on the land, Kurraba House at no. 2, as well as 6 and 8 Baden Road. Sir Ernest had difficulty subdividing the property, eventually giving North Sydney Council 10 blocks (now Hodgson and Spains Lookouts). Due to low bids at auction for the remaining prime waterfront lots, E. K. White decided to build the some of the flats buildings in Kurraba Road.

In the meantime the White's hired noted architects Fowell, McConnell and Mansfield to design them a house that would remind them of living on an ocean liner ("P and O style"). *Baden House* featured a flat roof, an open deck promenade and coloured railings on the first floor. The house was named for their only son, Baden, a R.A.A.F. pilot who was killed in 1944.

After Sir Ernest White's death in 1983, the house was auctioned in 1984. Twin brothers

Jerry and Tim Tyrrell (grandsons of Lady Pauline and Sir Ernest White) bought the house, demolished the house and redeveloped the site into 8 luxury townhouses.

## 2, 6 and 8 Baden Road

Ernest K. White (owner of Mollison and other noted racehorses) purchased five houses and a large parcel of land on the tip of Kurraba Point from Dr George Sly for £30000 in about 1929. He subsequently subdivided the land and created the Kurraba Point Estate.

*Kurraba House* (2 Baden Road) replaces an earlier home of the same name erected in the vicinity of the present house. This house was most likely built in the 1850s when John Cooper began to offer 99-year leaseholds from Thrupps Grant. According to L. F. Mann, *Kurraba* was the home of the Jarretts, and in the 1880s Mrs Massie called *Kurraba* her home following stock and station agent, Keith Jopp.

*Kenyon* and *Thurlow*, 6 and 8 Baden Road respectively, are also fine examples of Federation houses later converted into apartments.

Kurraba Point Estate comprised land “placed at the imposing entrance to Australia’s fairest city, it has been subdivided into thirty-five residential allotments on which will be erected the exquisite homes of some of Sydney’s most influential citizens. Thus is decreed the destiny of Kurraba Point – gift from the lavish hands of Nature – the harbour’s last available priceless gem”.

## 17 Baden Road

By contrast to the federation apartments across the road, 17 Baden Road is a determinedly interwar home designed in 1937 by architect Thomas D. Esplin for Mr and Mrs C. J. Jameson. It is an interwar Spanish Mediterranean style on a site falling steeply from the building to a cliff edge below to the beach below. According to *Decoration and Glass* magazine in May 1937, “the house would appear to be single storey structure. From the harbour front it appears to be three storeys, the designer had been able to present a well-balanced and proportioned elevation from both viewpoints - no mean achievement in view of the unusual difficulties”. “Spanish influence is adapted to

modern Australian design is evident in the exterior which features cream wall, green tiled roof, wrought iron window grilles and decorative concrete grilles” (*Australian Homes and Plans*, c.1939)

*Return back to Kurraba Road and enter reserve.*

## Kurraba Point Reserve

Kurraba Point Reserve comprises the **SPAINS LOOKOUT, HODGSONS LOOKOUT** and the large flat area on the waterfront of Neutral Bay. This area was once a sandstone quarry, established around 1850 to supply stone for the construction of Fort Denison as well as ballast for ships returning to England. Patrick Hayes acquired the land and started a soap and oil factory works at the Point. G. V. F. Mann remembers, “two large oil boilers which he used – 8 feet diameter by 5 feet deep – were once used by Benjamin Boyd for wool washing purposes at his store at *Craignathan* at the head of Neutral Bay from whence they were removed with much difficulty on to a large punt and transferred to the Point”. The Port Jackson and Manly Steam Ship Company purchased Hayes’ former oil factory in 1883 and established a large depot and engineering works here. The depot was the scene of one of Sydney’s most dramatic and tragic fires involving a Sydney ferry in 1936 when the newly renovated *Bellubera* caught fire and five men were who working in the ferry’s engine room at the time were trapped. Two men died; another saved his life by sticking his head out of one of the portholes while rescuers cut through the hull to reach him.

The historic Kurraba Point workshops were closed by the end of 1964 and additional lay-ups were established for the company at Balmain. The State Government purchased the Kurraba Point site and in 1974 the site was cleared and grassed and the present **KURRABA RESERVE** created.

Overlooking Sydney Harbour is **SPAINS LOOKOUT** containing remnant 1930s furniture and depression era work scheme elements such as the concrete fences and paving. Note the Council logo in the fence at front and the name and date in the paving below the bench at the rear. This lookout was named in honour of Alderman J.S. Spain in 1937 for services rendered to North Sydney Municipality and of the long

association of his family with the district. Staunton Spain, a solicitor, lived at "Wallaringa", Neutral Bay, where his ten children were born. In September 1937 at a Council meeting Ald. Spain opposed the name saying, *"that it is absolutely contrary to my wishes, I desire the name Coronation Park, or failing that, Hunter Park"*.

**HODGSON LOOKOUT** is most likely named for Alderman R. L. Hodgson, mayor of North Sydney 1932-1934.

### 192b Kurraba Road

Interesting interwar flat building with nice detailing above portico and tile exterior at entrance located on part of the Kurraba Point Estate and adjoining the Hodgson Lookout.

*Continue walking back along left hand side of Kurraba Road.*

### 145 Kurraba Road

Site of one of the first homes built on Kurraba Point, *The Towers*. Businessman, Patrick Hayes, built his home in the mid-1870s above the oil and soap factory he had established in 1874 on the foreshore facing the Bay. According to G.V. F. Mann, "The Towers" was said to be the first house in Sydney built throughout of concrete. The property was later taken over by the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company Limited (who had purchased the former oil factory as their company depot in 1883) and leased out to various tenants. It was eventually demolished by the early 1960s.

### 143 Kurraba Road

Present block of 64 flats called *Maralinga* replaced the former house named *Winona* which had been built in 1917 for draper William Winn by Stanley Dixon Winn, merchant and director of the Watsons Bay and South Shore Ferry Co Ltd. This block of flats was built in 1963 by developers RALIM Properties Limited and was touted in building magazines of that time (1960s) as the epitome of bachelor flat design. RALIM also built similar flats in High Street, North Sydney and Peel Street, Kirribilli.

### 137 Kurraba Road

House occupies the site of former home called *Hershell* and owned and occupied by solicitor George Sly. Goerge Sly also owned

the first *Kurraba House* located nearer to The Point.

### 133 Kurraba Road

*Rotherwood* is a complex of flat buildings built between Kurraba Street frontage and the Kurraba Point Reserve cliff edge. Adjoins modernised federation flats at 129 and 131 Kurraba Road.

### 168 Kurraba Road

*Casa Madrona* is a large prominent 1930s block of flats designed in the inter-war mediterranean style with an important relationship to the adjacent flats at 4 Shellcove Road. Unfortunately the building has been painted a fairly bland colour.

*Continue walking along Kurraba Road to entrance to Kurraba Wharf. Take steps on left.*

### 115A Kurraba Road

*Once Upon a Time* is a P and O style house originally garden units situated in *Wyldfel Gardens*, Potts Point. It was designed by architect John Brogan and built originally in 1935 for William Crowle and his wife. When *Wyldfel Gardens* was taken over by the Navy in 1940 Crowle organised for the building to be transported across to Kurraba Point by barge during 1941. Note the turn of the century wrought iron gates at the entrance (Crowle imported them from England) bearing the German quote, "when somebody makes a journey, they have a story to tell". There is also a Goethe quote near the front entrance, "live peaceable with all, so shalt thou live a happy life thyself". *Once Upon a Time* has been divided into three apartments and at one time had a boatshed beneath, now an apartment.

*Return to Kurraba Road and cross over to Hollowforth Avenue.*

### 146 Kurraba Road

The avenue is named after *Hollowforth*, 146 Kurraba Road which was designed by architect, E. Jeaffreson Jackson in conjunction with S. G. Thorp for Professor Threlfall and completed in 1893. He named the house after the village in Lancashire where he was born. According to the North Sydney Heritage Study Review Inventory, "this is a dramatic and innovative architectural statement in the shingle style by

one of the leading architects of the Federation era”.

Architects Spain and Cosh added a billiard room with bedroom over was added to the garden front on the eastern side in 1913 for the then owner, A. H. Way. *Hollowforth* was then subdivided into two flats in the 1980s. The roof structure was partially damaged by a fire in 1994 but subsequently reconstructed to original detail. Of particular note are the undulating stone garden walls that surround the symmetric picturesque design. Note the shingled wall surfaces, numerous stopped hips, dormer windows and massive brick chimneys on the roofline and exposed timber beams of the projecting first floor.

Adjacent to either side of *Hollowforth* are a nice group of federation and interwar buildings. Of particular note is the inter-war Mediterranean stuccoed house at 144 and the two-storey shingled building on the corner with Hollowforth Avenue.

*Cross back over Kurraba Road. Before continuing, note entrance to SPAINS WHARF ROAD.* S.W. Spain was an Alderman of the North Sydney Council from 1925-1931.

*Continue along Kurraba Road to Wycombe Road traffic lights. Cross over at lights and enter lower end of Wycombe Road. Turn left into Wallaringa Avenue.*

## 6-8 Wallaringa Avenue

Former *Benleigh Private Hotel* (house name originally *Gillerstone*) and built at the same time as the adjoining houses *Henley* (no. 10) and *Finchley* (no. 12) by Miss Jane Davy in 1907/08. Operated as *Benleigh Private Hotel*, a 27-room private hotel until 1985 when it was sold and converted into luxury apartments.

## Wallaringa Mansions

Site of former stone cottage *Wallaringa* built by William Dymock in the 1850s. Solicitor Staunton Spain bought the stone cottage and they moved here in 1863. They had ten children whilst living in *Wallaringa* and various members of the family lived in the house, and others in the area well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After father Staunton William's death, the property was inherited by the sons.

The house was greatly enlarged by Staunton Spain to accommodate the rapidly growing family. Alfred Edgar Brown became a lessee of that part of the *Wallaringa* on which the original house was located and preceded to erect two new buildings, now known as *Wallaringa North and South*. *Wallaringa North* contains remnants of the original *Wallaringa House*. Brown also built *Valetta* on lot 27 (now part of the site) and another building called *The Cottage*. Brown then operated it as the *Wallaringa Mansions* private hotel. Most recently used as low-income housing, the site is currently undergoing redevelopment, including renovation and conversion of some of the existing buildings into luxury apartments.

Alfred Edgar Brown is variously described as a mining expert or grazier and seems to have bought and built several properties in the Neutral Bay area as investments, as he was living at Meadow Flat, via Rydal.

## 5 Wallaringa Avenue

*Nutcote* is the former home and studio of May Gibbs, MBE. The house was designed for May Gibbs in the interwar Mediterranean style by the noted Sydney architect, B.J. Waterhouse in 1925.

May Gibbs, author, children's book illustrator and cartoonist, was born in Kent, England in 1877. The family migrated to South Australia in 1881. In 1885 the family moved to Harvey River homestead, Western Australia, where she spent two impressionable years in the Australian bush, and finally settled at 'The Dune', Perth. Demonstrating artistic ability at an early age with a penchant for fantasy and satire, Gibbs was encouraged to study art in England. Between 1900 and 1913 she thrice travelled abroad, became proficient in various styles of artwork and executed fanciful depictions of Australian animals. She received assignments to illustrate from Western Mail and the publishers George Harrap & Company, London amongst others. In 1913 she moved to Neutral Bay, Sydney, NSW, and maintained a steady livelihood with commissions from publishers, especially for the works she both wrote and illustrated. In 1916 *Gum-Nut Babies*, the first in a series of five 'Gum-Nut' booklets, was published by Angus & Robertson with whom she worked for over fifty years. The successful *Tales of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie: Their Adventures*

*Wonderful* was published shortly afterwards in 1918. In 1923-1924, *The Story of Nuttybub and Nittersing* and *Two Little Gumnuts - Chucklebub and Wunkydoo*, were published by Osboldstone & Company, Melbourne. In 1919, Gibbs married Bertram James Ossoli Kelly, a mining agent, who became her manager. They moved into *Nutcote* in 1925, the house they had built in Neutral Bay, set among eucalypts and banksias, from which she drew inspiration for the enduring 'Bib and Bub' comic strip. Her last book, *Prince Dande Lion*, was published in 1953. Gibbs' contribution to children's literature was acknowledged in 1955 when she was appointed a Member of the British Empire, and in 1969 when she was granted a literary pension by the Commonwealth Literary Fund. May Gibbs died in Sydney on 27 November 1969.

In her will May Gibbs left *Nutcote* to Unicef, which at the time could not own property, so the house and contents were auctioned in 1970. Later owners were interested in demolishing the house and developing the site. In 1987, concerned relatives and friends formed the May Gibbs Foundation and succeeded in having the house of *Nutcote* protected by a Permanent Conservation Order. It was also placed on the Register of the National Estate. Convinced by the widespread support generated by the Foundation, North Sydney Municipal Council purchased the property in 1990. It was leased to the Nutcote Trust, who then set up May's home as a House Museum. The Museum is open Wednesday to Sunday 11am – 3pm. ([www.maygibbs.com.au](http://www.maygibbs.com.au))

## 7 Wallaringa Avenue

Federation bungalow named *Muritai* built in 1919 for J. Ferry. The North Sydney heritage inventory describes the house as “an interesting and well executed Federation harbourside bungalow which exemplifies both the informality of decoration and the homely, vernacular philosophy of the style...relates well to its neighbours, No. 5 (*Nutcote*) and no. 9.”

## 9 Wallaringa Avenue

Another single storey Federation bungalow house built in face brick with multi-hipped and gabled roof clad in terracotta shingles. Relates well to its neighbours, no. 7 and no. 5 (*Nutcote*).

The remains of Spains Wharf can be seen below 9 Wallaringa Avenue, including the stone steps leading to it.

*Backtrack to Lower Wycombe Road*

## 28 Lower Wycombe Road

*Rothesay* was operated as a boarding house for many years. Originally built by jeweller Alfred Saunders in 1907, the house was purchased by sisters Isabella and Jessie McKinnon who converted it into a private hotel offering “1<sup>st</sup> class accommodation 45-50 guests, electric light, continuous hot water service, 3 minutes from boat”. It was named for an island off the west coast of Scotland.

William Charles Allen (Allen Hotels) purchased the property from the sisters in 1946 and continued to operate *Rothesay* as a boarding house until 1977. It was again sold and continued as a boarding house until 1982 when it was restored and converted into 10 apartments.

## 18 Lower Wycombe Road

*Wurrunbirri Flats* erected on this site in 1925 by Joseph Nyssen for Alice Phillips.

## 8-16 Lower Wycombe Road

Nice group of federation houses and flats built in the period 1890-1920. Note numbers 8-16, named respectively *Warriston*, *Kaloma*, *Kamlyn* and *Trevore*, all built in 1896 by the Davy Family on the Clee Villa Estate.

## 2 Lower Wycombe Road

*Clee Court* is a group of five dwellings arranged around a central courtyard and built about 1934 on the site of *Clee Villa*. *Clee Villa* was one of the very first homes built in Neutral Bay in 1832 by Thomas Lindley. G.V. F. Mann in his 1938 history of the North Sydney Municipality, recalls that *Clee Villa* was built “on stone foundations – large wells were cut out of the rock under the house for storage of water. Lindley had a rope walk there. The remains of the rope walk were in existence in the sixties and extended along

the whole length of the present Lower Wycombe Road”.

One of the earliest tenants of *Clee Villa* was Joseph Phelps Robinson (who died there in 1848). Robinson was a former member for Melbourne for the Legislative Council of New South Wales, a Quaker and was a Manager for the Royal Bank of Australia (otherwise known as “Ben Boyd’s Banker” or the “member for Boyd”).

The Mann family occupied *Clee Villa* between 1866 and 1868 after which John Frederick Mann purchased *Craignathan*. Afterwards, Abraham Davy, a Quaker, owned the house. Other past tenants included Victor Prout (an artist and cousin of famous English artist, Skinner Prout) and Hans Quist (a jeweller lived there and erected a gold smelting furnace in the paddock at the rear), Archibald Colquhoun Fraser (Clerk of the Peace) and James Johnstone (the Manager of the Orient Steam Ship Company).

G. V. F. Mann remembers “the house was surrounded with groves of various fruit trees and avenues of lemon trees. The latter were said to have been planted by Mr James Milson, who in 1825 cultivated an area in the vicinity of Wycombe Road and Wallaringa Avenue”.

## **1 Lower Wycome Road**

The *Bayswater Penthouse* formerly a private hotel known as *The Royal*. The original house named *Warialda* was built on this site in 19- and became a boarding house in 1915. By the 1920s it was known as *The Royal Guest House*. *The Royal* operated as

a private hotel up to the 1980s when the owners restored the original brick residence and converted it into apartments, demolished the 1960s waterfront building and created a new apartment complex on the site.

*Continue to end of street and turn left into Hayes Street.*

## **19-21 Hayes Street**

The Neutral Bay Post Office was originally established in 1889 in the chemist shop of Mr Hume at the corner of Ben Boyd Road and Military Road under the first official post and telegraph master J S Hay. It moved to this site in 1926 and eventually closed at the end of 1986 as it was considered uneconomical and the proximity of other busier post offices nearby. It was downgraded from official to non-official status in 1971 when the new post office opened at Neutral Bay Junction in Military Road.

This former Post Office has recently been converted into a private dwelling.

## **11-15 Hayes Street**

Trio of federation shops with art nouveau motifs still visible in archway to verandah on first floor of number 11. The middle shopfront has been much altered, whilst in the shopfront closes to Lower Wycombe Road, the brickwork has been painted.

**Our Gem of the Harbour walking tour ends here at the Neutral Bay Wharf, Hayes Street.**