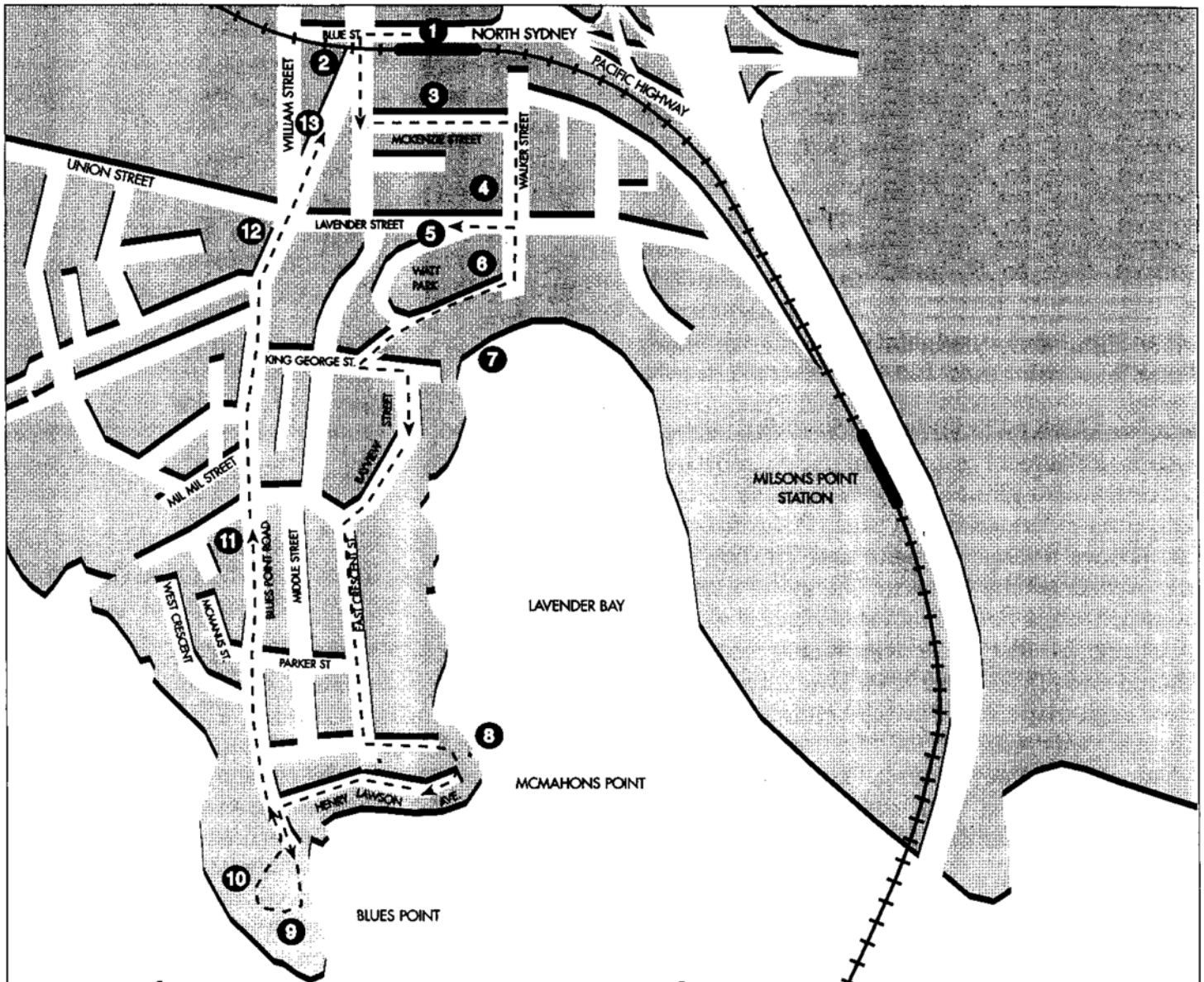




Walk 2

Lavender Bay to Blues Point

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 North Sydney Station 2 St. Peter's Presbyterian Church 3 St. Francis Xavier's Church 4 Christ Church 5 Watt Park 6 Quibree, Berowra 7 Lavender Bay, Ferry Wharf | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 McMahons Point 9 Blues Point 10 Bellvue Site 11 Blues Point Hotel 12 The Old Commodore Tavern 13 Lawson Seat, Presbyterian School House |
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We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 2

1. NORTH SYDNEY

This area was first named Hunter's Hill, then became known as St. Leonards. A township of St. Leonards (now the heart of North Sydney) was gazetted in 1838, with planned streets and crescents. It had been mostly wild bush, inhabited by Aborigines of the Cameraigal tribe. The first recorded British landing was at Careening Cove in 1788. Settlement was sparse but, in 1826, a Sydney newspaper, the Australian prophesied: "In time we shall see a town rising on the North Shore equal in consequence to Sydney." The 1846 Census showed that in 106 houses in St. Leonards lived 223 males and 139 females, including children. Twenty years later, local Boroughs were formed but the name North Sydney was not formally adopted until after they amalgamated in 1890.

North Sydney Railway Station was opened in 1932 when the old line to Milson's Point was changed to cross the Harbour Bridge.

Walk along Blue Street to the corner of Blues Point Road.

2. ST. PETER'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1866

This is the oldest Presbyterian parish in Sydney, a Government grant having been made in 1844. This land extended down Blues Point Road, so the terrace houses opposite and the two halls are owned by the Church. The stone hall was built in 1864, a new school to replace a wooden structure 24 feet x 18 feet which served as church and school since 1844. Two enlargements have been made to the present church; an organ chancel was erected for the organ built in London by Maley Young. The church spire reaches to 80 feet and, marked on some old maps, guided mariners into the Harbour.

The church has a vice-regal pew, being the nearest Presbyterian Church to a Governor-General in residence at Admiralty House. A plaque marks pew 14 as that of the Very Rev. Dr. John Flynn, Flynn of the Inland, who regarded St. Peter's as his parish church when in Sydney, until his death in 1951.

The graceful manse was built in 1871 and, with the church, is on the Register of the National Estate.

Moving down the south of Miller Street cross through St. Peter's Park into McKenzie Street.

3. ST. FRANCIS XAVIER'S CHURCH, 1879-81

Also on the National Estate, opened as a school. The church was restored and enlarged in 1964 as a War Memorial. Its new north wall is almost 1,000 square feet in area, of inch-thick French glass set in concrete, believed to be the largest such in the world. Designed by Stephen Moor, it symbolises the story of the Christian Life. Found during the restoration were carved wooden Stations of the Cross, covered with layers of paint. Restored, they were seen to be over 100 years old, the work of German master-carver Joseph Dettlinger.

In 1992 the church was affiliated with St. Mary's Church, Ridge Street, served by a priest from that church.

Across Mackenzie Street, the Presbytery is also on land that had belonged to Francis Lord, MLC. Purchased in 1874 by Mrs. C. Mackenzie, it became Wangan, the home of her son-in-law, E J Smith, Deputy Stamp Commissioner. The handsome stone house with its ornate barge boards and ironwork, was sold to the Church in 1913. Alas, its gardens became a carpark in recent years, now earmarked for re-development.

Before turning right into Walker Street on the left hand side of McKenzie Street, notice the delicate iron lace balcony on the corner terrace. Also in Walker Street, note the terrace at Nos. 11-37, the Royal Art Society Rooms at Nos. 25-27 and the stone convent, Mercedes at No. 9.

4. CHRIST CHURCH, 1872, LAVENDER BAY

Francis Lord donated the land and W M Lithgow, Auditor-General, bequeathed £500. Architect Benjamin Backhouse designed the church. Stonemason W M Eaton built it of stone quarried on the site, except for hard Pymont stone around windows and doors. Its tower was never completed, the stone being used for a memorial gate. Its colourful west window is a Tucker Memorial. The font is in memory of artist Conrad Martens' young daughter, Elizabeth, who taught Sunday School. The organ, by Walkers, was probably made about 1854. The slightly sloping floor is unusual in a church.

Its neighbouring Rectory, also on the Register of the National Estate, was bought from Mrs. Amelia Dangar in 1878. From its balcony, the Rev. Dr. Frank Cash, Rector 1922-62, photographically recorded construction of the Harbour Bridge.

Cross Lavender Street and look down on Watt Park.

5. WATT PARK

The park was once Neepsend, residence of John Carr with a beautiful garden. Some of the groups of English trees and island palms remain in Watt Park, named after C W Watt, mayor 1923-26. They grew well because of a stream that flowed over ledges (now in Rectory grounds) and cliff. It is said that, during severe drought in the 1840s, fresh water was taken in barrels and rowed across to Sydney Town, where they were sold for five shillings each.

No. 21 Lavender Street is said to be the one time coaching station for Harnett's horse buses which ran to Chatswood and Mosman.

Either walk east to Clark Park, which was possibly named after Alderman Edward M Clark, Mayor of North Sydney from 1892-93 and 1918-19. He was previously Mayor of East St. Leonards in 1885.

Or walk west along Lavender Street and down the steps at the foot of Walker Street. As you come down the steps, the house on the left hand side with the tower and statues was once the home of the late Brett Whiteley, artist.

6. BEROWRA, 2 WALKER STREET, 1888

Was used as a station master's residence by the railways. It was occupied from 1919-41 by George Schweinsberg, the last station master of the old Milson's Point station, who became first station master at Wynyard. The house is still railway property.

Quibree, 1855. In Lavender Crescent, this was built by stonemason, W M Montgomery for Matthew Charlton Jr., first Mayor of the 1871 Borough of Victoria. In 1863 he acquired Lavender's adjoining grant, but the 1892 railway line reduced the land. It has been modernised and an art studio added.

7. LAVENDER BAY

At one time this was Quibree Bay, the name understood to be the Aboriginal for fresh water. Later, it was known as Hulk Bay, where a prison hulk was moored with convicts being sent to Norfolk Island or Port Macquarie. George Lavender (a son-in-law of Billy Blue) was boatswain of the hulk Phoenix, and made his home ashore.

Waterside: The ferry wharf is less used than of old and the old swimming baths have disappeared with the demolition of the two storey wooden baths house (1905-75). Here Cavill's Baths opened in 1881. World champion Dick Cavill, born here in 1884, developed the crawl stroke. North Sydney Amateur Swimming Club formed in 1902. Lime kilns were built here in the early days.

Walk to the end of the wharf to see the picture of Lavender Bay.

Walk around Lavender Bay noticing the four 1993 plaques regarding Cavills Baths and Neptune Engineering. Also note the slipway once used for boat building and repairs.

Follow the path to the end, go up steps, turn left into Bayview Street. Note several attractive cottages, old terraces and mansions. Continue into East Crescent Street (a crescent from the 1838 plan). Take the steps to the lookout beside the garden of No. 9 Warung Street. Then go down the steps to McMahan's Point, noting the plaque regarding the old tram route.

8. MCMAHONS POINT

Michael McMahan, a Sydney brush manufacturer from Ireland, had his home here and was Mayor of Victoria Borough at the amalgamation to form North Sydney Municipality in 1890. This had long been a main ferry link with the city. Ferries berthed along the shore until about 1970. Look back over North Sydney as far as Admiralty House. The turning circle is the old tram loop of 1909; trams ran along Blues Point Road to Lane Cove. There is a high lookout, from Parker and Middle Streets above. Below, Henry Lawson Avenue was named because the great writer used to arrive here by ferry to walk home.

Walk along Henry Lawson Avenue. At the entrance to the reserve, go around the headland of Blues Point, up steps to a park for a rest. Some steps are cut in solid rock, perhaps by convicts. See the traces of Captain Norrie's home, Gibraltar on the point.

9. BLUES POINT

Billy Blue, probably a part West Indian, in 1795 was sentenced in Kent to seven years' transportation for stealing 20lb of raw sugar from a ship, when he was working as a wharf labourer. In Sydney, he married Elizabeth

Williams in 1805, one of the first marriages at old St. Philip's Church. He became Sydney's first ferryman in 1807 and had the right to bequeath his ferry service to his sons. In 1817, Blue was granted 80 acres on this point, bounded by subsequent Union and Lavender Streets. He had been a watchman on the south shore and was deputed to watch over here for smugglers and runaway convicts, but Billy was caught with two barrels of spirits tied to his boat and spent a year in gaol.

In time, Blue had seven boats plying between here - previously called Murdering Point - and Millers Point. These led to Governor Macquarie giving him the nickname Commodore of the Fleet, hence Commodore Street and The Old Commodore Inn. Blue farmed the area, growing produce for sale in Sydney. His house was approximately on the present corner of Blues Point Road and McManus Street. Old Billy was a remarkable man, popular and ingenious. He died in 1834, perhaps not so very old as legend says. He had six children and several generations of descendants are still on the North Shore. A plaque on the Eastern side of the point marks the former dock of the first cross-harbour steam ferry service.

10. SITE OF BELLVUE: c1872

Blues Point Towers carpark replaced a house designed by Edmund Blacket and purchased in 1873 by Moses Bell, who had shared in the huge Holtermann lump of gold quartz at Hill End. Nearby he built Bell Terrace of six houses for his daughters; this, too has gone. It was in an effort to save the Blacket house from demolition that North Shore Historical Society was formed in 1958. The stones were marked for transfer to the park below, as a museum, but the Society could not raise the finance at the time and the project lapsed.

Blues Point Road is one of the few in North Sydney to have been constructed by convict labour.

Walk up Blues Point Road back to North Sydney Station.

Cottages: Numerous cottages of early residents still stand, in either stone or wood. Note Nos. 89 and 91. A ramble through any of the side streets is rewarding. Several cottages still have water-storing cisterns in their grounds. West Crescent Street, till recent years, led to Eaton's

Timberyard now Sawmiller Reserve. Some streets bear Blue family names.

11 & 12. HOTELS

Blues Point Hotel displays enlarged photographs of old North Sydney. On the corner of Union Street John Blue named an early inn The Old Commodore. Later additions and rebuilding kept the name till the hotel was demolished in 1973, replaced by the Tavern of the same name. It records Blue's first ferry service and early Blues Point. Opposite, a stone house next to the Community Centre is believed to be another early home of the Blue family.

Off Blues Point Road in Mil Mil Street is a seat dedicated to the late Hope Wolgast, a benefactress of the Historical Society.

On the corner of Blues Point Road and King George Street is a plaque commemorating the Wellington & Sons London Store 1891.

13. LAWSON SEAT

Note the stone seat, by the corner with William Street, commemorating the years Henry Lawson spent living and writing in North Sydney.

Schools: Note the 1864 stone Presbyterian school house (see No. 2) facing the foot of Miller Street and now restored. The school that grew out of this became a State school in 1874 and moved to Blue Street. The 1878 sandstone gothic revival building with spire is still standing opposite North Sydney Railway Station. This is also on the Register of the National Estate. The school's name was changed from St. Leonards to North Sydney in 1910. A high school section was formed in 1913. Soon these moved to North Sydney Girls' and Boys' High Schools and the Primary Section, in the 1930s, moved to the grounds of Crows Nest House, eventually to become the North Sydney Demonstration School. The school on the Blue Street site closed as North Sydney Technical High in 1969. In 1992 the school building was restored as part of the Greenwood Centre, and is now the Greenwood Hotel, being named after Nimrod Greenwood, Headmaster 1884-1914. See North Shore Historical Society plaque.