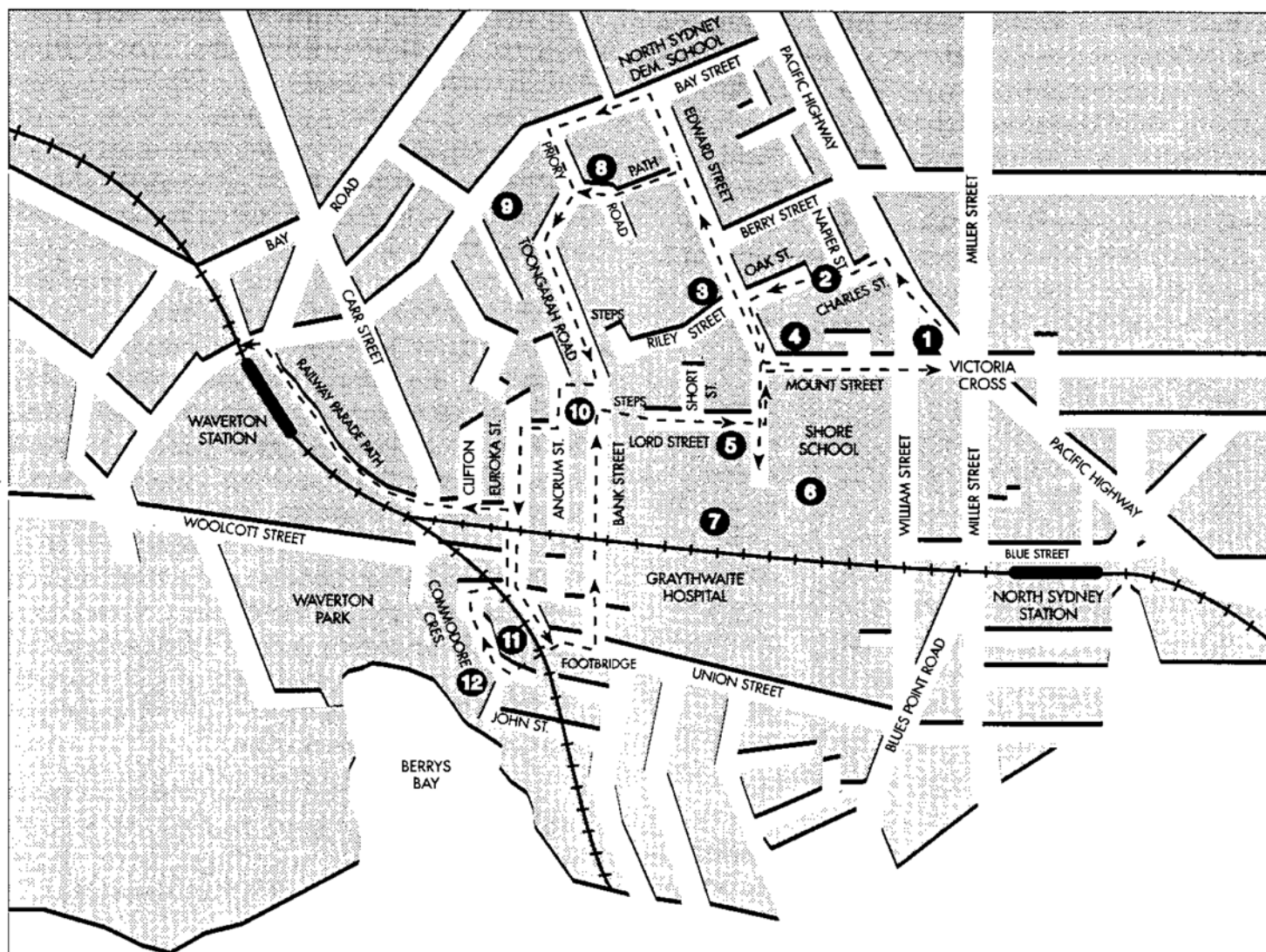




Walk 3

North Sydney Post Office to Waverton

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



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We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 3

1. NORTH SYDNEY POST OFFICE, 1886

(Information supplied by the Post Office Historical Society.) The first post office on the North Shore, then known as St. Leonards, opened in 1854. It is believed that a sub-office had operated since 1852, in charge of John Ponsford, who received an allowance of £5 per annum. The first Postmaster, Mr. Stevens, received £12. Deliveries began five years later. Uniform of the letter carriers (postmen) was a black silk hat, with gold lace band and scarlet coat. In 1863, there were two letter deliveries a day, 9.00 am and 4.00 pm. Letter receivers (boxes) were not in use until 1867. In 1892, the more thickly populated areas had a third delivery. The Postmaster in 1888, Mr. Reid, had one assistant, Mrs. Hope, so asked for another, claiming he worked 13 hours a day. His request was refused. Next year he applied again and it was granted for he reported that his duties commenced at 5.15 am and ended at 9.00 pm. The office was still in unsuitable premises.

Tenders for this building were called in 1885. One for £11,500 was accepted, to include a new Court House on the site of the old Watch House. The Postmaster asked that the washhouse be provided with tubs and water laid on. His request was not at first favourably received - "If the Postmaster wanted these unnecessary items he should provide them himself". However, it was granted "as the building was erected at such great cost". It was completed in 1888 and the Post Office moved in on 31st January, 1889, changing the name to North Sydney on 28th August, 1890.

Postal and telegraph and money order business was transacted through a window two feet wide. The tower was added in 1895 at a cost of £965. The clock was installed in 1900, the Postmaster General, Joseph Cook, suggesting that North Sydney residents pay one third of the cost. Restored in recent years, the last trace of police horse stables at the rear disappearing, the whole building is on the Register of National Estate, 1978.

The Court House built as part of the complex is still used for this purpose, but on a much reduced basis - a matter of some concern for the legal profession and their clients who are (1994) agitating for a return to full-time operation.

The adjacent former Police Station now functions only as a 'shopfront' operation and as a holding centre for the few people now appearing on criminal charges in the Court House.

Walk briefly north along Pacific Highway, formerly the Lane Cove Road, to Charles Street.

2. DON BANK MUSEUM, 6 NAPIER STREET

May be visited in the corner of Charles Street. This timber house, early called St. Leonards Cottage, has four original timber slab rooms believed to be the house built on Edward Wollstonecraft's land. An 1823 list exists showing timber used from the Wollstonecraft/Berry Shoalhaven River estate. Remnants of newspapers, The Australian of 1835 and The Sydney Morning Herald of 1854, were found on its walls in the restoration, 1980. From the time Richard Peek, wholesale merchant, lived in the cottage in 1847, owners and occupants have been traced almost fully. At some time, the name was changed to Don Bank, perhaps referring to a river. In 1903 saddler James White purchased the house and remained in his family until 1979, when it was acquired by North Sydney Municipal Council. In January 1981 it was opened as a local history museum by the then Governor-General. A detailed book of the research into its history and restoration is on sale. The museum is open Wednesday, 12.00 noon - 4.00 pm; Sunday, 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm; or by appointment, through the Stanton Library. There is a small entrance fee.

Walk through the restored nineteenth century garden of Don Bank to its Oak Street gate. Notice rows of early cottages here and in Edward Street (named after Wollstonecraft)

3. ROCKLEIGH GRANGE

On north west corner Edward and Riley Streets. On Wollstonecraft's death in 1832, land here passed to the control of his partner, Dr. Alexander Berry and his wife, who was Edward's sister Elizabeth. Here, the famous artist Conrad Martens built his 1840s stone house and art studio. With his wife and family he lived here until he died in 1878. Altered out of recognition by later owners, including Hon. John Hughes, Minister for Justice, it was sold to the Church of Rome. The first Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Cerretti arrived in 1915. See

the crest on the iron gates. Pope Paul stayed here (the only place in Australia) 30th November - 3rd December, 1970. The Papal Nunciature moved to Canberra in 1978. The house became a wing of the Catholic Teachers' College of nearby Mount Street, now Catholic university with Mary McKillop Campus. See North Shore Historical Society Plaque.

Walk south along Edward Street to Mount Street corner.

4. WEST MOUNT STREET

In a terrace house here, Abbotsleigh School began. See plaque on wall of St. Josephs' Convent. The handsome facade of the convent went up in 1902. Below its dining room is the earlier underground water storage. The Chapel was commenced in 1913. It contains the tomb of founder Mary McKillop, destined for sainthood.

5. UPTON GRANGE, 1870, EDWARD STREET

Built on Francis Lord's land for his son-in-law, Commander Francis Hixson, R.N., it had to be let when he was transferred. William Wardell, architect of St. Mary's Cathedral was a tenant. From 1916 it was a nurses' home for neighbouring Graythwaite, until purchased in 1925 by Sydney Church of England Grammar School, for juniors. Notice the brick sundial in the front garden made from convict-made bricks.

6. SYDNEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND GRAMMAR SCHOOL (SHORE)

Across Edward Street are some fine school buildings of the nineteenth century. The site was land purchased by Commissary William Miller from Commissary Walker in 1833. Seen far and wide is Holtermann's Tower.

Bernhard Otto Holtermann arrived in Australia in 1858 from Hamburg, Germany, with very little money or English. His financial success came when his syndicate, The Star of Hope, found the world's biggest lump of reef gold. Though veined with slate and quartz, its actual gold content was estimated at over 3,000 ounces. The specimen was 4 feet 9 inches high, 2 feet 2 inches wide and averaged 4 inches in thickness. Its value in 1872 was £12,000. With his share Holtermann bought the Miller family's property here and built a grand house with a tower. From this he pursued his hobby,

photography and installed a camera obscura. Holtermann commissioned photographs up and down the country and took them to publicise Australia overseas. Briefly a Member of NSW Parliament, he died on his 47th birthday, 1885. T A Dibbs of neighbouring Graythwaite purchased the property and built homes for his family but sold it to the Grammar School in 1888.

The school incorporates part of Holtermann's house and the tower, remodelled in brick, flies the flag. It used to include a stained glass window depicting Holtermann with his huge gold find, now incorporated in the school's library. New additions have been built.

7. GRAYTHWAITE

Look in from the gate at the end of Edward Street. The land was part of 39 acres granted to Commissary Thomas Walker in 1832. the following year he sold 13 acres to Commissary Miller (for £20/13/0) and, in 1841, another 13 acres to William Lithgow, Auditor-General. The early stone building, at the rear of Graythwaite, with stable and kitchen fireplace, probably groom's quarters, is thought to date back to Walker, who died in 1850. Then Edwin Mawney Sayers, shipping owner and member of the 1859 first elected NSW Parliament, enlarged or rebuilt the home as Euroka Villa. In 1855 a bushfire burnt its wooden verandah. In the 1870s, Sayers built Ellamatta (part of Mosman Community Hospital) and sold Euroka to George Dibbs, later Sir George, Colonial Treasurer and, in 1885, 1889 and 1891-4, Premier of NSW. Renamed Graythwaite, the house passed to his brother Thomas, General Manager and 68 years with the Commercial Banking Company. The Dibbs raised the house to three storeys and added a two-storey brick coach house. T A Dibbs built the large house Kailoa, facing Union Street, for his son Burton. In 1915, Dibbs (later Sir Thomas) gave Graythwaite to the State for sick and wounded soldiers and sailors. For some 60 years it was administered by the Red Cross for ex-servicemen. The North Shore Historical Society, having researched its history, raised funds to restore the railings of the rooftop "widows walk" in 1975. The house is registered by the National Estate. Graythwaite Nursing Home is linked with Greenwich and Royal North Shore Hospitals.

Walk back north along Edward Street almost to Bay Road. Just past the 1920s cottage with a kookaburra in its coloured verandah leadlighting, take the lane, left between Nos. 50 and 52.

8. THE PRIORY, 5 PRIORY ROAD

From about 1836, George Barney, Commander of the Royal Engineers, leased the land from Alexander and Mrs. Berry, purchasing it in 1840. His Priory was a single storeyed stone house, with cellars below, stables and other out buildings, and extensive gardens. The main entrance was from Bay Road.

Barney designed Victoria Barracks, Semi-circular Quay, Newcastle breakwater, the Martello tower of Fort Denison and other structures. He was Colonial Engineer, Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands, Surveyor General, Member of the Legislative Council and, briefly, Lieutenant Governor for Northern Australia. For these reasons, Barney was often away for long periods and let The Priory to other respected citizens. Elizabeth Berry died there in 1845. Hon. Francis Lord, MLC is believed to have lived there in 1850; later, the widow of Sir Thomas Mitchell. Barney died in 1862. From 1856-60, he had owned, as well, the home now Admiralty House.

In 1914, The Priory attics were built up into a second storey with balcony. It is now eight home units, including eight Georgian rooms and the cellars. The grounds were subdivided and Priory and Toongarah Roads formed.

Walk to the lookout at the end of Toongarah Road.

9. SITE OF TOONGARAH

In this house, Sydney church of England Girls' Grammar School was conducted 1916-36.

Site of Waverton House 1845: In present Waverton Avenue. William Carr, solicitor, and his widow enlarged the stone house from which the suburb takes its name. From 1865 it belonged to Richard Old, an early director of the Australian Gas Light Company, and his descendants until 1974. It had been rebuilt in brick in 1922. In the 1970s the land was subdivided and now modern home units use the name.

10. GO DOWN THE STEPS INTO BANK STREET

By the lane (right) into Ancrum Street and Euroka Street. This is a pocket of early workmen's cottages and stone houses, some restored, some modernised. In the stone terrace and cottage at 31 Euroka Street Henry Lawson lived at times - see plaque on nearby rock. His daughter, who unveiled the plaque, told how he grew vegetables there and gave them to neighbours.

There is also a Henry Lawson plaque on the post of No. 28 Euroka Street.

Pass under the arch of the railway line that linked with the city, over the Harbour Bridge, in 1932. The stone tunnels to North Sydney, seen from Bank Street overpass, are dated 1927. Turning left, walk briefly east up Union Street. Note the fine rows of stone terraces. Walk over the concrete railway bridge (1978) for an extensive view.

11. FOOTBRIDGE

This replaced the 1890s wooden bridge over the line that extended from St. Leonards to Milsons Point, opening in 1893. That had been built on protest from C.H. Woolcott (Sydney town clerk 1857-87) for the line cut off his graceful home Ivy Cliff from Union Street and took his garden. Descend to Commodore Crescent.

12. BLUE COTTAGE, 3 COMMODORE CRESCENT

This short street is just about the north-west corner of Billy Blue's 1817 Northampton farm and carries on his nickname of "Old Commodore". The two-storeyed stone house seems to have been the home of one of his family but it is unlikely that old Billy (who died in 1834) ever lived in it. Modernised, with a fine view of the bay, it is private property.

From here the more energetic walkers can cross back over Union Street, take steps from Bank Street up to Lord Street, briefly left in Edward Street and down Mount Street back to North Sydney Post Office.

Others can follow Commodore Crescent towards the west under the old railway line, then back under the 1930s railway bridge at Euroka Street and, keeping left, briefly at the foot of Carr Street, take the path beside the railway line to Waverton Station.
