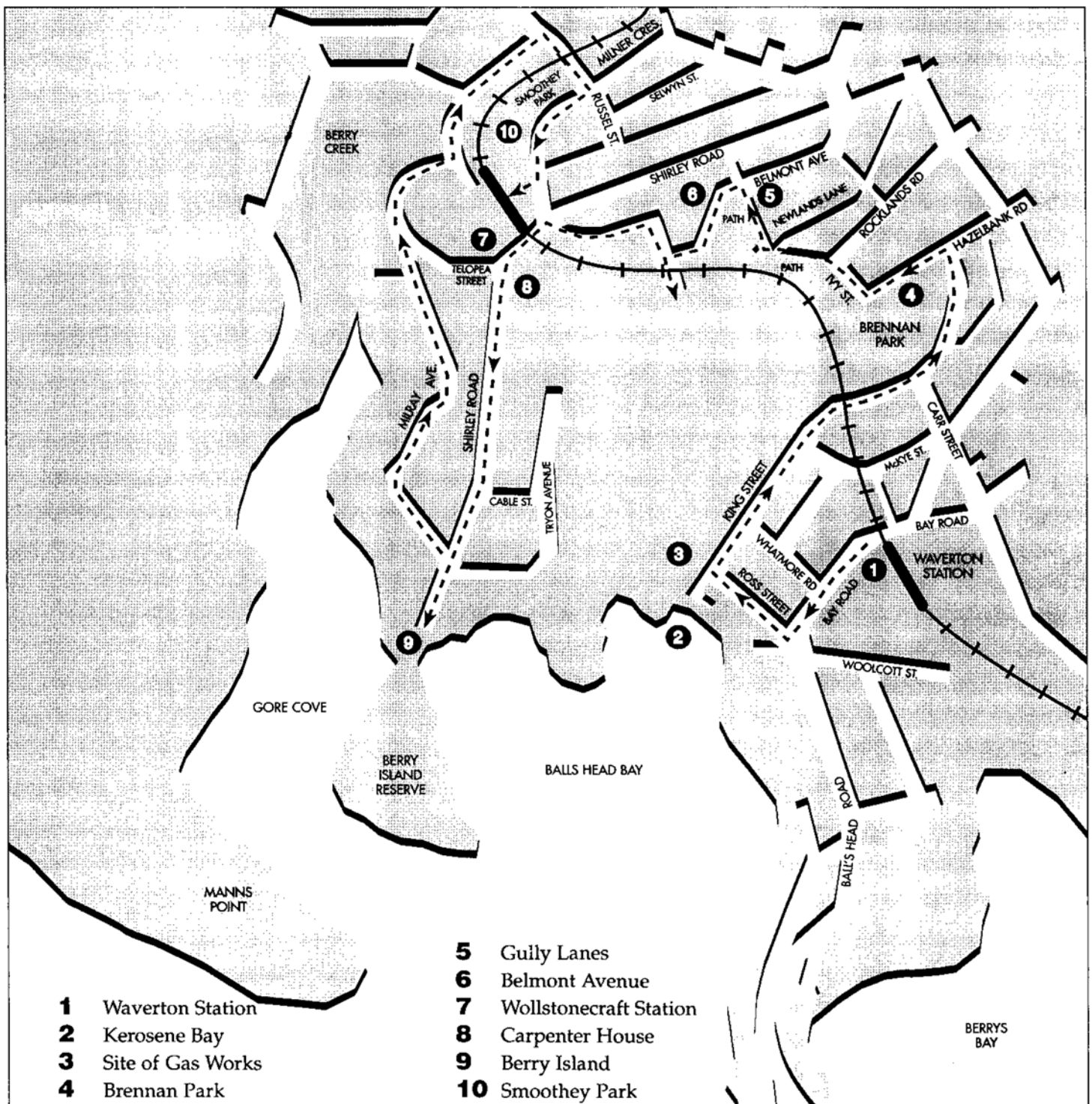




Walk 5

Waverton Station to Berry Island and Wollstonecraft Station

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 5

1. WAVERTON RAILWAY STATION

As explained in Walk No. 4, Waverton Station was opened in 1893 as Bay Road Station. The suburb now takes its name from demolished Waverton House. Old residents tell of a stream and waterfall running through this area; there is evidence of it by the path optimistically named Railway Parade.

Walk south along Bay Road, turning right into Ross Street. Note the charming "turn of the century" houses, as well as a few old wood and stone cottages, apparently remaining from still earlier boat building, quarrying and kerosene works.

2. KEROSENE BAY

The Bay used to be called Kerosene Bay. Vessels loaded with kerosene used to anchor here, some belonging to Isaac Ellis Ives (later to become Lord Mayor of Sydney) for his Sydney Bond. For a short period it was Sugarworks Bay because of the sugarworks project. Later it became known as Oyster Cove, which name was used for the old North Shore Gas Company installations. Now on the maps it is Wollstonecraft Bay, an arm of the wider Balls Head Bay.

3. SITE OF GAS WORKS

Gas was first produced commercially on the North Shore at the Neutral Bay works, in 1877. However, to expand, the Gas Company acquired land here in 1906. Local people protested. Waverton Progress Assn. was founded in 1911 in an effort to prevent the works from being built, but after two years, construction began. Manufacture of coal gas ceased here some years ago. Plans to develop the site further for intensive residential, commercial and waterside use aroused heated local protests mainly because of the volume of traffic this would bring to narrow residential streets. There are also concerns about contamination from toxic residues from the gasworks operation.

4. BRENNAN PARK

Walk up steps into King Street and cross Brennan Park. An old stone drinking fountain, long out of use, is in memory of C.A. Walker, Mayor of North Sydney 1912-1913.

The lychgate entrance to the Park on the corner of King Street and Hazelbank Road, has a plaque telling us that the Park was named after Alderman Richard Brennan, JP. He, with the help of Mr. A P Cooper, was instrumental in transforming the rubbish dump that was here into this lovely park. Ald. Brennan collected money from nearby residents, which the Council subsidised and the land was purchased.

5. GULLY LANES

Follow Ivy Street (beside the railway line) to the corner of Rocklands Road. Find the steps to the path sometimes called Meadow Lane, as it crosses the meadow which forms the end of Newlands Lane. Enjoy the remnants of a rainforest fully and listen to the birds. Steps lead up to Belmont Avenue, with some attractive homes amongst the high rise units which have replaced many Edwardian houses and well built bungalows. Turn left along Belmont Avenue.

6. BELMONT AVENUE

Continue west along Belmont Avenue until it joins Shirley Road, which soon passes over the railway line at Wollstonecraft Station. This road takes its name from early residents, the Shirley family. Continue down Shirley Road.

7. WOLLSTONECRAFT STATION

The original station here called Edwards Road, was built when the line from Hornsby to St. Leonards was extended to Milsons Point, opening in 1893. Later the name was changed to Wollstonecraft. The station buildings were pulled down and replaced in the 1970s.

Edward Wollstonecraft and Dr. Alexander Berry were partners who came to the Colony and settled in Sydney Town in 1820. As merchants,

they set up shop in Sergeant-Major's Row (now George Street) close to Cadman's Cottage. Berry was overseas on a purchasing mission when Wollstonecraft was given a grant of 524 acres on this northern shore by Governor Brisbane. This land was "lying and situate in the County of Cumberland and District of Hunters Hill" as all this area was called. The quote is from the deeds dated 30th June, 1825 about five years after the grant was made. The deeds go on to describe the boundaries, giving degrees and compass points. "To a deep gully and to its junction with Port Jackson Harbour at William Blue's west corner." In another direction the line goes to the mouth of a gully at the bottom of a deep bay, on the west to Gore's eastern boundary, then north to the head of a small stream. From here, so many degrees and chains to "a large gum tree" and so on.

The government had the right to put in a public road, and to use "such Timber as may be deemed fit for Naval purposes." One condition was that 50 acres be cultivated and the land must not be sold within five years. This was the "Crow's Nest Farm", giving its name to the later suburb of Crows Nest.

8. CARPENTER HOUSE

Walk south along Shirley Road. Pause at No. 25 to admire the handsome old mansion and lovely garden. By 1914 this house, called Heidelberg, had been occupied by Albert Borchard. The large Edwardian mansion of red brick and a slate roof, with towers, is little altered and stands in beautiful grounds. It became the home of the Carpenter family. In 1935 Sir Walter Carpenter gave it to the government for a clinic. It is a Tresillian Mothercraft Centre, administered by the Royal Society for Mothers and Babies.

Continue along Shirley Road on the Wollstonecraft peninsula. Note the old mansions and charming cottages that, unlike the northern end of Shirley Road, have escaped redevelopment so far.

9. BERRY ISLAND

This small island was attached to Wollstonecraft's land by a stone causeway over mud flats, now reclaimed as lawns. Wollstonecraft died in 1832, so his share of the property passed to his sister and her husband Alexander Berry. It became known as The Berry Estate. By arrangement between the estate and the Government, this island, like Balls Head, was dedicated a nature reserve for public recreation in 1926.

A pleasant path encircles the island, its wild flowers a joy in spring. The island used to be much more thickly covered with vegetation; it is paying the price of popularity, as a site for picnics, band concerts, etc. At the start of the track, the earth is thick with whitened shells and small bones, where Aborigines feasted, i.e. kitchen middens.

Along the track on its western side, look carefully for a large Aboriginal rock engraving of a whale - it is even spouting! Avoid stepping on the engraving as it needs preserving. Close by, see the small round waterhole in the rock. On its edge are grooves where stone axes were wet and sharpened.

Look across Gore Cove to the Greenwich Peninsula, which ends in Manns Point. The cove keeps up the name of Provost-Marshal William Gore, who arrived in 1806 with Governor Bligh, and was granted land in this district. At the southernmost point of Berry Island, do take in the panoramic view - Birchgrove, Balmain, Pyrmont to the city.

From the eastern side is a clear view of Balls Head to the site of the coal loader, and HMAS Waterhen, the Navy Depot for patrol and mine-hunting boats. It is also a supply and repair base. You may recognise some of these which were in the TV series Patrol Boat.

Behind Waterhen are the sandstone cliffs from which filling and stones were taken to create the Captain Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island,

and to join that island to the main harbour shore. Above the cliffs, wartime temporary office buildings, owned by the Commonwealth were built on State land - it had been the site for a Bay Road Public School.

The sea level in Sydney Harbour, as elsewhere, has varied over millions of years. During the ice age, when much of the northern hemisphere was covered in an ice cap thousands of feet deep, the sea level dropped from 150 to 200 feet (50 to 70 metres) below what it is at present. Where we are now was about 7 miles (12 km) from the coast.

About 6,000 years ago a long rapidly moving river, its source beyond present Parramatta, cut into the sandstone, as did its tributaries the now Lane Cove River and Middle Harbour. When the seas rose with the melting of the ice, the inlet became Sydney harbour, a drowned river valley with varying depths of mud and silt.

Just after leaving Berry Island, No. 12 Shirley Road is the main metropolitan quarters of the NSW Fisheries, with its boat access to Gore Cove. Gore's 750 acre grant became Artarmon Farm.

The harbour and foreshores are patrolled in boats and vehicles, the officers check fishermen in legal and illegal areas. Professionals and their equipment must be licensed and are not allowed in certain areas at weekends. Some fish caught must be above a certain size. Amateurs are not allowed to take oysters in Sydney Harbour.

Gore Bay personnel also inspect fish shops serving the area between Bondi, Hornsby, Liverpool and Penrith.

The Fisheries Research vessel, the Kapala, investigates ocean fishing up to 100 miles out of Sydney, looking for new fishing grounds and checking new methods and equipment, a very useful service located in Wollstonecraft.

10. SMOOTHY PARK

Walk back up Shirley Road, turning left into Milray Avenue, at the end of which is Smoothey Park. Notice the tall Angophoras (Sydney red gum) and turpentine trees. Turpentine timber was used for supports for wharves, as it is not attacked by insects and other pests. Berry Creek runs through the park to Gore Cove. Follow the well defined path across the concrete bridge, leading into Greenwich. Below, see an old footbridge which seems to have replaced an even earlier one. Further up the gully was a high footbridge known locally as the White Bridge. Wollstonecraft Scout Hall is in the park, beside the railway line.

Below, and on the steep slopes, one can find rocks chipped with pickaxes, indicating very old tracks. Were they used by early settlers? Some soldiers were given land grants in this region as a reward for services in the early colony. They were expected to farm the land, to produce then desperately needed food. In some places there are old steps cut into solid stone.

Walkers can take a short cut to Wollstonecraft Station or take the higher path to Russell Street. Pause for a moment to appreciate all the stonework used in the building of the Bowling Club which can be seen on the left. In September 1983 the club celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Edward Wollstonecraft. Going uphill in Russell Street, just under the railway viaduct, turn right into Milner Crescent.

From here a short lane leads down to Wollstonecraft station.
