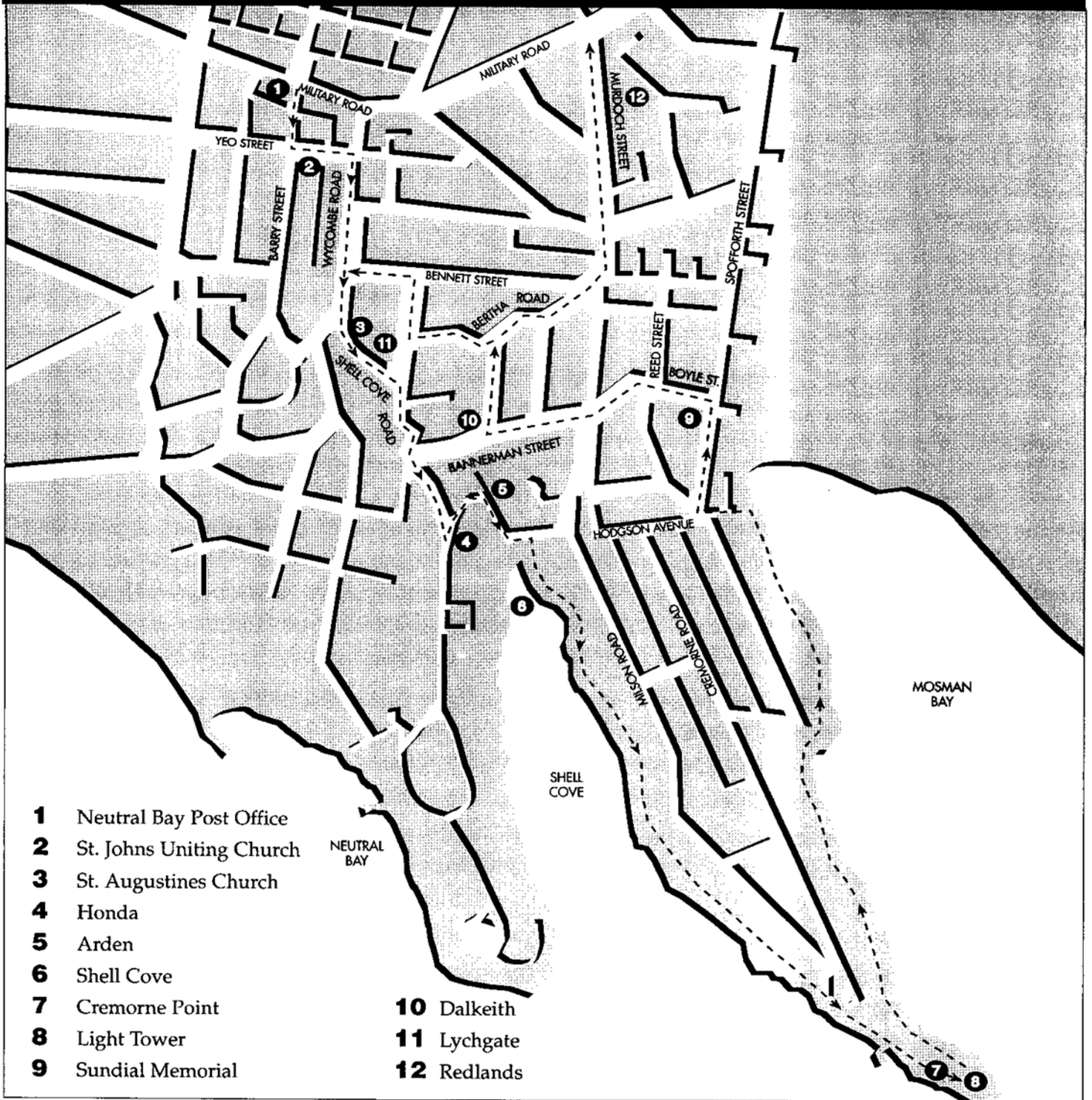




Walk 8

Neutral Bay Post Office to Cremorne and Military Road

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 8

Military Road was laid out in 1870-71, to haul cannon and supplies to the new fortifications at Bradleys Head and Georges Head - placed there on account of the Franco-Prussian War in Europe. The only other road in this district was a track to industries in the bay, which became Ben Boyd Road.

1. NEUTRAL BAY POST OFFICE

This Post Office building was completed in 1971; Neutral Bay Post Office was near the Hayes Street Wharf.

The first Post Office in Neutral Bay was in a chemist shop, on the south-west corner of Ben Boyd Road and Phillips Street. It opened in January 1889 with Mr Hume as Post Master. There had been pressure from residents, as the nearest Post Office was in North Sydney, serving a population of up to 2,000 in the whole municipality and Mosman. There was a letter receiver (box) at the lower end of Ben Boyd Road, but a new box was set up at the end of the vicarage garden, on the corner of Wycombe and Raymond Roads.

In 1891, Mr Hume enlarged his shop when an official Telegraph Office was set up. J S Hay became Post & Telegraph Master on £75 a year. He was succeeded in 1892 by Mrs. Agnes Wardrop, a widow with three children, who had been a telegraph probationer at Milsons Point on 2/6d a week. She was still in charge of this office in 1913. There is a break in the records until mention of a new office building completed in 1926 (probably the Hayes Street office, now closed).

Turn right down Barry Street to the south-east corner with Yeo Street.

2. ST. JOHNS UNITING CHURCH 1890

(Previously Neutral Bay Presbyterian). Even before that date, some services had commenced in the previous year in a carpenter's shop. This land was given by Captain Robert Craig. The architect was Slatyer, the builders Tafield and Collins. Rev. Robert Thomson was its first Minister. The neighbouring Manse, in Yeo Street was added in 1920; the hall in 1924.

Opposite, the Fire Station (1909) is Federation style, designed by E C Drew, Assistant Government Architect.

Continue along Yeo Street and turn right, south down Wycombe Road, the tram route to Neutral Bay 1900-1956. For more details of houses and history of this area see also Walk No. 6.

3. ST. AUGUSTINES CHURCH, 89 WYCOMBE ROAD

Before the first church was built here in 1887, the parishioners had a long walk over rough bushtracks and steep hills to St. Thomas in North Sydney. They had to carry lanterns on Sunday nights. Local men met on the ferry to and from work in the city and founded the church. They still carried lanterns to St. Augustines at first; they were useful to light the church during services! The wooden building was replaced in brick in 1923. The rectory has now been sold.

Continue down Wycombe Road, into Shell Cove Road as far as:

4. HONDA 1858, 55 SHELL COVE ROAD

When it was built as architect Francis Grundy's home it was quite isolated in the bush, with a view down the bay - Shell Cove. From 1864, it was the home of Wm C Bennett, an Irishman, Commissioner for Roads and Bridges, who died in 1889. (You have already passed Bennett Street on your left, off Wycombe Road.) It had to raise its own fruit, vegetables, poultry, etc. Its gables with decorative barge boards, verandah columns and heavy wooden main door remain. The house has been recently renovated. See North Shore Historical Society plaque on wall.

Return slightly north and turn right into Honda Road to Bogota Avenue.

5. ARDEN, 17 BOGOTA AVENUE

This old sandstone building, from 1903 to about 1920, was a college for girls. It was opened by Miss M A Carter and carried on by the Misses Haslingden. In the early 1970s it was beautifully restored as a private home.

6. SHELL COVE

At the southern end of Bogota Avenue turn right to a path along the shores of Shell Cove, originally Hungry Point. This beautiful bay was soon explored by the first settlers of Sydney and numerous oyster shells were crushed and burnt here for lime for house building.

The delightful walk reveals homes of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which usually had their own boat havens and harbourside pools along both shores of the bay.

At the end of Milson road near the ferry wharf is an old tram stop in a little known public lookout. Follow the walk to Cremorne Point.

7. ROBERTSONS POINT - BETTER KNOWN AS CREMORNE POINT

The aborigines called it Goram-Bulla-Gong. Members of the 1788 First Fleet named this Careening Point, evidently from the fact that governor Phillip's flagship Sirius was careened in Sirius Cove, now Mosman Bay.

On 7th January 1822, after a voyage of seven months, Scotsman James Robertson arrived in the ship Providence with his wife, six children and two pipers. Two more children were born in Australia. Soon after his arrival, Robertson was appointed supervisor of all Government astronomical instruments and clocks, at £30 per annum. Governor Brisbane made him a grant of 86 acres on this peninsula and here he built a fine Georgian house.

The Robertson family grew up and scattered. A son became Sir John Robertson, Premier of New South Wales. James Robertson died aged 86. In 1853 he had sold this land to North Sydney pioneer, James Milson.

In 1856, the point was leased from Milson to J R Clarke and his partner Woolcott. They turned the area into an amusement centre, with band music and dancing on a special stage, archery, quoits, shooting gallery, skittles, gymnastics, refreshments and fireworks at night. It took its name from Cremorne Gardens in England

(which used the name of an Irish peer, Lord Cremorne). This opened on Easter Monday 1856, with half hourly ferries from Circular Quay. The scheme lasted a few years and gradually faded away. In 1889 the land was cleared and sub-divided for sale.

It was discovered that sales were intended to reach to the water's edge. Quick legal action prevented this and a recreation reserve of 100 ft. above high water mark, all round the point was saved for posterity. See the North Shore Historical Society plaque.

Proposed Coal Mine, 1894. A mining company wanted to establish a coal mine here. In 1847, Rev W B Clarke, Rector of St. Thomas Church, North Sydney and "father" of New South Wales geology, had said there was a coal seam under the harbour. This was later confirmed by Professor Edgeworth David. A diamond drill bore was set up in Cremorne in 1893, and a 10 ft. coal seam was discovered at a depth of 2,917 feet. One bore was where Montana (1909) is now; another approximately at the corner of Hodgson Avenue and Cremorne Road. Fortunately there were conservation minded residents even in those days and the lovely area was preserved.

8. LIGHT TOWER

Walk along path to the light tower on Robertsons Point. Rest and enjoy the harbour view. Ferries or buses can be taken as transport home, but the path right round the point is rewarding in views of old homes, guest houses, ferries and Mosman Bay.

Walk along this path skirting Mosman Bay, admiring the gardens tended by residents.

9. SUNDIAL MEMORIAL

At the northern end of the reserve, take the steps after the ones to Bromley Avenue. These steps lead up to the sundial memorial to the late Alderman Atlee-Hunt. At the top of the steps turn left into Boyle Street. On the corner of Boyle and Reed Streets there is a block of units

called Tamarisk Gardens with a plaque to the late Howard Hinton, arts patron and benefactor. The local streets, Bannerman, Boyle, Murdoch and Spofforth are named after early Australian Test cricketers.

10. DALKEITH C1911, 8 BANNERMAN STREET

This two-storeyed sandstone house, with slate roof, shingled balcony and art nouveau metal around its verandah and high Edwardian style within, was the home of Frank Whiddon. About 1914, he ran a motor car No. 442, a 16 horsepower Standard. For a quarter century the house was the Norwegian Seamen's Church, until it closed in 1978 (few seamen coming to Sydney). The former billiard room became the chapel, with the grace of simple Scandinavian woodwork and embroidery. The Pastor and his family lived upstairs and the Norwegian flag flew in the lovely gardens. See the North Shore Historical Society plaque.

Take steps adjoining up into Guthrie Street. Almost any route from here will provide interest with a variety of house styles.

11. LYCHGATE

Walkers could turn left into Bertha Road and right into Burroway Street. Here, note the lychgate on a path to the rear of St. Augustines Church. Turn left into Bennett Street, right into Wycombe Road and back to Military Road.

Or continue north along Murdoch Street past SCECGS Redlands Junior School with its elegant portico, formerly 1934 Cremorne Girls High School.

In the early years around here, people used to hold archery contests in vacant paddocks and make enormous bonfires on 24th May for Queen Victoria's birthday.

Reaching Military Road via Murdoch Street, notice opposite:

12. REDLANDS

The original house was the home of Gerard Phillips, Mayor of North Sydney when he died in 1892. A school was founded in 1884 in Fitzroy

Street, Kirribilli, by the Misses Arnold and Liggins. In 1896, this was transferred to Redlands. In 1945, it was combined with the North Sydney branch of Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, which had commenced in Christ Church Hall, Lavender Bay in 1911. In recent years, the school has been carried on by parental management and is now co-educational.

The original Redlands was set in five acres, with beautifully laid out gardens, tennis lawns, orchard and stables. There was a spring nearby. Gerard Phillips was a land agent managing large estates in Neutral Bay, especially the Cooper Estate (previously Lieut. Alfred Thrupp's 700 acre grant). In this position, he was able to name streets. Several local streets are believed named after Phillips' family members - Bertha, Claude, Ernest, Gerard, Phillips and Winnie.

The Borough of East St. Leonards was proclaimed 17th August 1860 but the first Council meeting was not held until 10th February 1868. The first Mayor was William Tucker. Other boroughs were St. Leonards and Victoria. These three amalgamated on 29th July 1890, when North Sydney Municipality was constituted. The first Mayor was Frank Punch. Mosman was one ward of this Municipality but separated on 11th April 1893.

In 1868 the population of East St. Leonards (including Mosman) was about 1,800. In the 1880s the population increased. Tram services and the railway extension to Milsons Point (1893) brought more residents. After the opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1932, Cremorne became a popular suburb.

Electric trams from the junction of Military Road and Spofforth Street first ran to Cremorne Wharf on 18th December 1911, with some services through to The Spit. The first use of the "new" corridor trams on the northside was along this line in September 1934. This line closed in April 1956.
