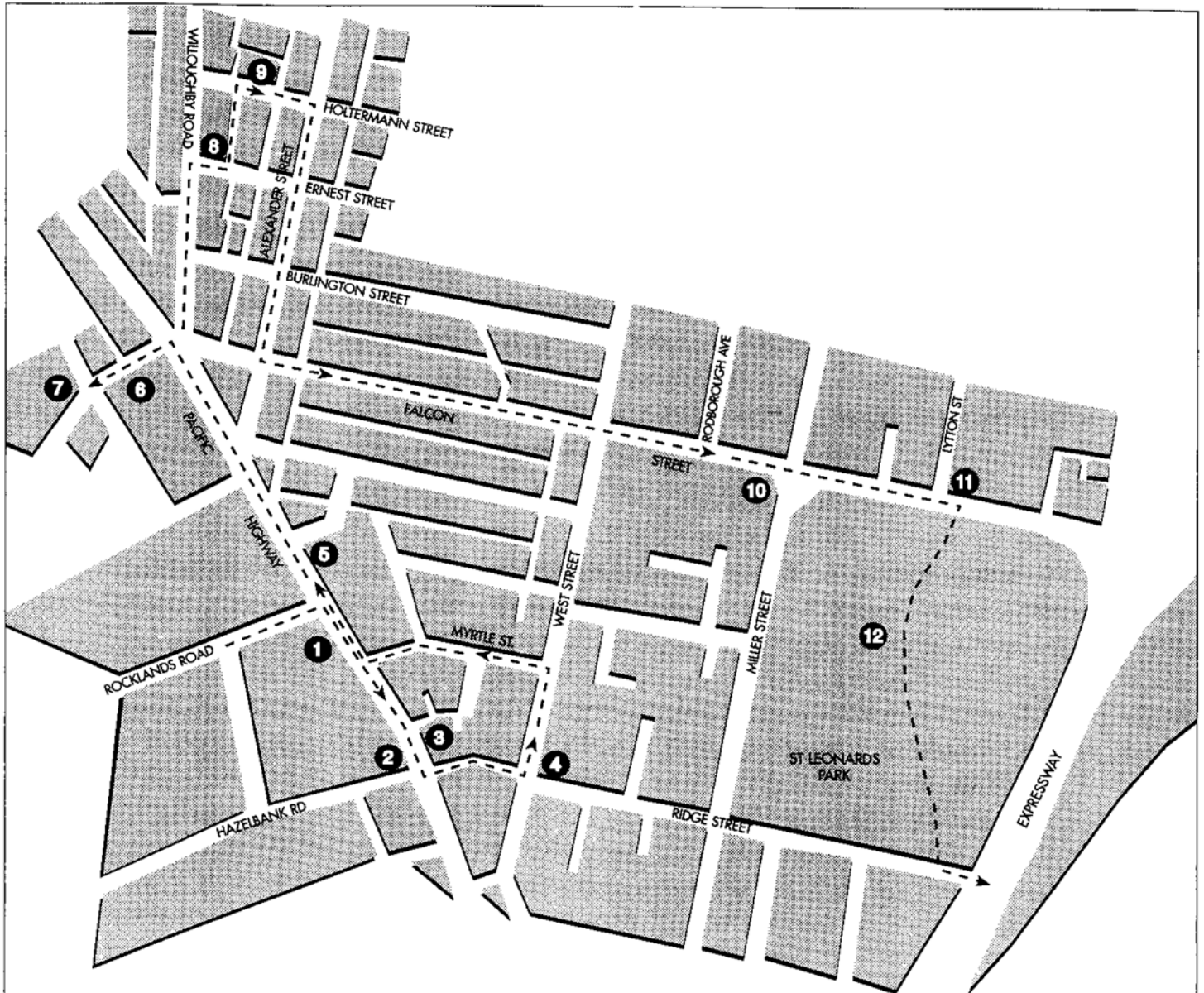




Walk 9

Crows Nest - Site of old Mater Hospital to St Leonards Park

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



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| 1 Site of Old Mater Hospital | 5 Former Crows Nest Boys' High School | 9 Uniting Church (Methodist) |
| 2 Former North Sydney Girls' High School | 6 Crows Nest Fire Station | 10 North Sydney Boys' High School |
| 3 Old Masonic Temple | 7 Uniting Church (Presbyterian) | 11 Northcott Neurological Centre |
| 4 West Street | 8 Northside Baptist Church | 12 St. Leonards Park |

We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 9

Start at the bus stop on Pacific Highway at Rocklands Road corner.

The highway, a name used after the opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1932, grew from the earliest road north, the Lane Cove Road, at times called the Gordon Road.

1. SITE OF MATER MISERICORDIAE HOSPITAL

This opened in 1906, further north on Willoughby Road, in a building vacated by the North Shore Hospital. The private section was formed in 1911, in a house Wenonah subsequently much enlarged. The administrative block and ward of 1915 was one of the last designs of Joseph Sheerin (noted for St. Patricks College, Manly). A north wing was added in 1925. Across Rocklands Road, the brick maternity block opened in 1941. These sections closed and a new hospital was opened in 1991 in Rocklands Road.

2. FORMER NORTH SYDNEY GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Was the first suburban high school for girls, which opened here in January 1914, on land purchased from the Berry Estate. It had grown out of North Sydney Superior Public School (still standing, Blue and Miller Streets), which, in turn, had grown out of an 1844 Presbyterian school. The girls were brought here by tram on the first morning and raced to be first through the gate. Henry Lawson's daughter, Bertha (Mrs Jago) was second. The distinguished school has been much enlarged. Part of the 1914 building was burnt out in 1976 but rebuilt.

In December 1993 the school moved across the Pacific Highway to the former Crows Nest Boys High School. See item 5.

Bradfield College, combined TAFE/High School occupies the former North Sydney Girls High School.

3. MASONIC TEMPLE 1922-75

Was built by Lodge St. Leonards-Samaritan, founded 1876. Increasing costs, as well as demolition of homes of members forced its sale for commercial use. The neighbouring building

was once the ice works, when ice was delivered to homes before domestic refrigeration. This building was later a restaurant.

Walk through laneway Hazelbank Place to West Street.

4. WEST STREET

On Ridge Street corner notice Playfair House and terrace. In 1853 land was granted to James Harris French, who paid £85 for it to the Colonial Secretary. It had houses on it when the property was sold to Arthur Muston in 1881 and resold to Thomas Playfair, butcher. Playfair, one time Sydney Lord Mayor, built up the corner one to Delamere, a fine example of the owner's house being larger and more elaborate than the rest of the row which were let or occupied by his family. The terrace has had many owners and is restored as professional offices.

Turn left along West Street past Vera Loblay House, Sydney City Mission Hostel for Youth. (The house was originally named Clifton Lodge, built by the Clifford Love family.)

This turn-of-the-century house is unique in North Sydney as its iron lace balcony has the rare pattern with a cameo like figure - angelic or human? Turn left into Myrtle Street, back to Pacific Highway, passing the former boys' school.

5. FORMER CROWS NEST BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

This grew out of St. Leonards North Public School which opened here in 1893. (The district was then St. Leonards.) As Jeremiah Crowley was Headmaster 1883-1900, it was popularly called "Crowley's School". The late Dr. C B Newling (founding Principal of Armidale Teachers' College) described his days here as a pupil teacher, aged 15: "The setting was almost rural. Such sights as a bullock team hauling loads of tree trunks were not uncommon. An occasional motor car would halt games in the playground while we crowded the fence to view the strange sight". The houses of the locality were new in 1901.

The boys' high school closed and is now occupied by North Sydney Girls' High School.

Recross the highway and walk north to the Crows Nest intersection. Look left one block along Shirley Road.

6. CROWS NEST FIRE STATION 1907

Designed by Walter Vernon, Government Architect, this red brick and terracotta tiled, 3-storeyed station is on the Australian Heritage Commission's 1978 Register of National Estate. It seems that the station took over as motorised equipment superseded horse-drawn engines operating from the 1895 North Sydney Station in Walker Street.

7. UNITING CHURCH, NORTHSIDE PARISH, PREVIOUSLY 1905 PRESBYTERIAN

Corner of Shirley Road and Nicholson Streets. Just here, in 1820, Edward Wollstonecraft built his farm cottage, The Crows Nest, on this high spot overlooking the harbour. Its name comes from a ship's lookout. He died in 1832 and his land passed to his sister, who was the wife of his partner, Alexander Berry.

In 1888, a meeting was held on the verandah of the cottage to found a Presbyterian Church. The estate had passed to Berry's brother, then a relative, Sir John Hay who donated this site. The cottage was demolished. The foundation stone of the 1905 church was laid by the Governor, Sir Harry Rawson and that of the Manse by Lady Hay. Bricks and slates from the parish halls (on the opposite corner 1914-67) were used in a major extension, opened in 1969 by Governor Cutler. This became the Uniting Church in 1977. The grounds are used as a public park.

At the traffic lights, cross this busy intersection to Willoughby Road corner. Look back at the row of shops, on the north-west side of the Pacific Highway, with their front tops decorated with plaster heads of ladies in bonnets. Many changes have occurred in the type of shops here from the early saddlers, carriage builders, bakers and produce merchants. Walk north along Willoughby Road to Ernest Place.

8. NORTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

Founded in North Sydney in 1886. On land donated from the Berry Estate, a brick church was put up here in 1900. It was used as a hall when a larger church was built. A lady who played the organ at the 1900 opening lived to see this building demolished in 1978. The 1909 church still stands with 1965 extensions. A new centre was built on the 1900 spot. This church, too, has opened its grounds as a park, much appreciated by shop workers in their lunch hour.

Walk through the small park behind the church to Holtermann Street. On its Willoughby Road corner stood the North Shore Hospital (now Royal North Shore), its foundation stone laid on 10 June 1887 by Sir Henry Parkes, NSW Premier. In the same building the Mater Hospital opened on 21 January 1906. See plaque on the wall of the car park in Holtermann Street.

Holtermann Street keeps up the name of B O Holtermann, Member of Parliament for this district, gold finder and patron of photography, who died in 1885; as does nearby Burlington Street, for his son Burlington happened to be born in Burlington, Ohio.

9. UNITING CHURCH, PREVIOUSLY METHODIST, 6-10 HOLTERMANN STREET

The 1886 church became the hall when replaced by the 1910 church (with three foundation stones). This was a daughter church of the original Methodist Church (1864-1931) demolished to make way for the Harbour Bridge approaches near North Sydney Railway Station. This formed part of the Uniting Church in 1977.

Turn right into Alexander Street (named after Alexander Berry). No. 103 is a stone cottage restored as commercial offices, with a sympathetic stone wall and gateway, through which one can look at a fine stained glass window at the back.

Pass into Falcon Street, turning left. This was an early tram route. On 17 July 1893 an extension of

the cable tramway (1886-1900) from Milsons Point to Ridge Street came along Falcon Street to Crows Nest. From 20 September 1893, electric trams ran east along Falcon Street from the Miller Street intersection.

On the north side of Falcon Street, Rodborough Avenue recalls that Rodborough House and grounds were resumed on 7 June 1917 for North Sydney Trades School which originated in an 1889 Academy of Art - now Crows Nest TAFE.

10. NORTH SYDNEY BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

Corner of Falcon and Miller Streets. Boys were transferred here in 1915 from North Sydney Public School (Blue Street), where high school classes had commenced in 1912 with 48 boys.

The site had been Crown Land, purchased in 1854 by H Baker, Post Captain, RN. The distinguished school has been much enlarged since then. The name of Falcon Street led to the use of a falcon in the crest and ex-pupils are Old Falconians. The large name board at the corner is the boys' own craftwork.

Cross Miller Street at the traffic lights and continue east along Falcon Street. Detour briefly into Lytton Street which has a variety of interesting houses.

11. NORTHCOTT NEUROLOGICAL CENTRE

An early hospital in a terrace house was replaced by Glengarlen hospital about 1906, in brick and red tile Edwardian style. Later, the hospital was partly owned by the late Dr. Roger Mackinnon. (His wife, Eleanor, OBE founded the Junior Red Cross in 1914.) Dr. Mackinnon ran one of the earliest motor cars in North Sydney. When they lived in Miller Street (now Civic Centre) he used to race trams up the hill to Ridge street - either could win!

The Diagnostic Centre is maintained by the NSW Returned Services League and is named after Governor Northcott.

A short stroll eastward reveals views over Warringah Expressway, for which hundreds of

homes were demolished. Cross to St. Leonards Park.

Old Sewerage Vent 1899: On an islet off the park, rises the old brick vent that has needed metal bands for strengthening.

12. ST. LEONARDS PARK

The name remains from the early name of the whole district. Through the 1870s a wordy battle raged to have this reserve not cut into four areas by intersecting roads but left as one park. The "fors" were led by William Tunks, First Mayor (1867-83) of the borough of St. Leonards, who was conservation minded. The "againsts" wanted to build more houses and shops and to drive their carts across, not half a mile more round Miller and Falcon Streets, to the water reservoir or the fortifications at Middle Head.

Tunks was also our Member of Parliament and he led the fight there too. As he was made chairman of a parliamentary committee, he eventually won! He is believed to have visited the park to attend to the trees every day. His stone memorial there, an elegant fountain, was restored for the Bicentenary in 1988.

The park contains sports grounds, playgrounds, picnic sheds, gardens, a music shell, a gun monument and, on Ridge Street side, the tall War Memorial. The grandstand was opened in March 1928 by Mayor H L Primrose - the Mayor who opened the Harbour Bridge on our side in 1932. In February 1954, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, during their first visit to Australia, drove through this park for the sake of thousands of assembled North Shore school children.

Buses may be caught in Falcon or Miller Streets; or Carlow and Ridge Streets lead westward back to the bus stop on the Pacific Highway.