The Art of Lavender Bay

A walking tour of landmarks and treasures

Introduction

On this walking tour you will encounter some of North Sydney’s most prominent landmarks and its hidden treasures.

Highlights of the tour include: the much beloved Luna Park; the elegant railway aqueducts arching above the steeply sloping steps and gardens of Walker Street; the beauty and tranquillity of Watt and Clark Parks; and on the water, ferries navigate the myriad of yachts and small boats to visit the Lavender Bay and McMahons Point wharves. All of this framed against the backdrop of the Harbour and the towering Sydney skyline.

North Sydney provides spectacular views of a harbour widely regarded as one of the most beautiful in the world. Since colonisation artists and photographers have stood at the head of Lavender Bay looking back across the harbour to take in the spectacular views of the harbour and the city skyline. Numerous photographs, paintings, illustrations and postcards have survived documenting changes in the bay, both physical and built environment, since settlement began. Lavender Bay too has been home to many notable artists, including Brett Whiteley, Garry Shead, Tim Storrier and Peter Kingston.

Lavender Bay is named after George Lavender, boatswain of the convict hulk Phoenix, moored in the bay in the 1820-30s. Lavender married Susannah Blue, a daughter of Billy. Also here were the 1881 baths of the large Cavill Family who between them invented or introduced the Australian crawl and butterfly strokes, and held many swimming records. Men’s and women’s baths remained here well into the 20th century. Another 19th century industry, boatbuilding, survived here until 1987 - note the slipway on the waterfront and the winding gear preserved nearby.
The railway viaduct arrived in 1893 cutting off the gardens which became Watt Park. The steps through the viaduct arches lead to some luxuriant growth in Walker Street. The first house, Berowra, was once the Station Master’s house, while the towered one on the opposite side of the steps was a home and studio of artist Brett Whiteley. Some older original homes survive nearby, including the 1855 Quibaree (after the Aboriginal name for the area).

**Our walk begins at North Sydney Railway Station**

**Turn right in Blue St and take steps on right before hotel across railway line to Walker St**

**Walker St**
Named for William Walker, Assistant Commissary General was granted land in 1832 (occupied by the present Graythwaite and SCEGS Shore buildings). This lower end of the street is a predominantly Victorian streetscape formed from subdivision of James Milson’s land in the early 1880s. Walker St extended from St Leonards Park in the north all the way south the head of Lavender Bay before it was cut in half by the construction of the railway line from the new North Sydney Railway Station in the 1920s and opened in 1932.

**Nos. 20-30 Walker St**
The Victorian terrace on your was built in 1885 by Francis Punch.

**Cross over to opposite side of street and continue walking along Walker St**

Noter the group of nicely detailed two storey federation terraces, **Nos. 25-37 Walker St** built in 1899 by importer Michael Henry Horwitz on land previously owned by Richard Harnett.

The next property **Nos. 25-27 Walker St** is the Royal Art Society of New South Wales Gallery. The society was established in 1880 when the then Art Society of New South Wales held an exhibition at the Garden Palace (later destroyed by fire in 1882). Brothers George and Arthur Collingridge and a number of other professional artists were the instigators behind the formation of the society.

The Society relocated to these premises in 1956 when the pair of houses (identical to those at **nos. 29-31 Walker St**) were purchased and refurbished and converted into the present galleries and members’ room with the art school studios above.

**No. 23 Walker St**
is a pretty little two storey Victorian villa built by real estate agent George Thomas Clarke in 1885.

A short distance further is a group of finely detailed two storey Victorian terraces at **Nos. 11-17 Walker St**. They are named **No. 11A (Brenda)**, **No. 11 (Glenlewis)**, **No. 17 (Kiengal)**, **No. 15 (Merryula)**. The house names appear in the parapet above the entrances. The four houses were built in 1885 for Mrs McKenzie.

![Walker Street, North Sydney, 1988. Painting by Marienne Wiles. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF 199)](image)
Mercedes, No. 9 Walker St
Large sandstone gothic villa originally named Cardigan. The house was built in 1885 by James Thomas Atchison a mining engineer and surveyor from Broken Hill. He sold the house to William Patrick Cahill and members of the family occupied the house until 1944 when it was sold to the Sisters of Mercy and they changed the name to Mercedes. More recently returned to private ownership.

Cross over Walker St

Christ Church
Located in a prominent location is this pretty Victorian Gothic Christ Church and adjoining rectory. The foundation stone of the church was laid in 1869 and opened in 1872 to the design of Benjamin Backhouse. Christ Church was the second Anglican Church established in North Sydney and built in the part of the township which developed above Lavender Bay.

Rev. Frank Cash was appointed in 1922 on the eve of the passage of the Sydney Harbour Bridge Act. From 1924 he watched the progress of the work from his rectory above the bay and wrote: ‘We the people of Lavender Bay are living in a transitional period, for the greatest possible changes are being made beneath our eyes’.

By 1926 the congregation was dwindling in the wake of the demolitions but the Reverend was always ready to see the hand of God in both nature and the ‘works of man’. Unperturbed, he explained the upheaval to his parish: ‘we view the magnificence in the ideal… over a scene of waste, and dimly catch its beauty through the ancient dust of falling walls’. He then set about documenting the Bridge in photographs and text, and published his work as The Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1930.

Cross back over Walker St and cross pedestrian crossing. Descend first flight of steps to front of restaurant. Follow path to left

Nos. 1-3 and 41-45 Walker Street are a group of houses situated on land forming part of land grant to local pioneer James Milson, bounded to the west by Walker St. Following a Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry in 1866, a waterfront public reserve was created at the head of Lavender Bay, the boundary being 100ft (30m) above high-water. Prior to the reclamation of the head of the Bay, the line of the original foreshore meant that this boundary touched Lavender Street, creating a triangular pocket of Milson's land bound by Walker St, Lavender St and the Reserve. This portion of land now contains this group of five houses and the corner shop (presently the Indian Harbourside Restaurant) built in 1907 by Henry Green, local builder and alderman of North Sydney, following the subdivision and sale of the Milson family properties. The corner shop was run by Connie Taylor in the 1920s-1930s.

No. 45 Walker St
This house was the former home of artist Tim Storrier. He was born in Sydney in 1949 and attended nearby SCEGS Shore. At the age of nineteen, Storrier won the prestigious Sulman Prize. He was the youngest artist to ever receive the award and hence catapulted to fame and success at an early age.

Storrier spent his youth in rural New South Wales. The landscapes of ubiquitous rural Australian scapes are ever-present in his work and the foundation for most of his painting. He acquired the Waverton gasworks studio in 1974 and then purchased this house in 1977 and established his studio in the lower ground floor
of the house. Tim Storrier's work is exhibited in collections in the National Gallery of Australia, the Louvre Museum in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York and the National and Tate Galleries in London.

Enter Clark Park
Named for Alderman E M Clark. Note the inset marble stone in the railing facing south to Lavender Bay which reads: “This stone commemorates the public work of Edward Mann Clark JP Alderman of East St Leonards and North Sydney for 44 years from 1885 to 1939 and Mayor for three terms”.

The Park was gazetted in 1868, at which time the foreshore was substantially different from today and the head of the bay was almost to present day Lavender St.

Return to Lavender St. Cross over Harbourside Cres. Take next right into Cliff St and continue to end (Alfred St)

Note terrace group below Vibe Hotel, which are one of the few remnant Victorian buildings in Milsons Point.

Stop here at intersection of Alfred/Cliff/Glen Sts

Look across the road

Milsons Point Railway Station
Perhaps one of the most mobile railway stations in Sydney, the current Milsons Point Station opened with the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932. The first station was completed in 1893 when the Hornsby to St. Leonards line was extended through Wollstonecraft and Waverton, around Lavender Bay to Milsons Point Ferry Arcade.

The ferry wharf was right on the point... but later on when the Bridge began to be built the ferry wharf was moved around towards where Luna Park is now, and the railway station was terminating there then too, as previously it was going right down to the Point. There were escalators to go down to the ferry wharf, probably the first escalators I’d seen... So we’d get off the tram and down the escalators to the wharf and into town. It was a lovely trip into town.

Allan Willoughby, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection

The old station was moved back up the Bay in 1915 and then again in 1924/5 when construction work began on the Harbour Bridge.
and the site was needed for the Dorman Long workshops.

**Turn right into Glen St. Walk a short distance downhill**

Note here the steps and ramp which was formed in 1924 when the tram terminus was moved here from the Point. New double tracks were constructed along Dind and Glen Sts where a double dead-end terminus with a scissors crossover was provided. This is the site of the tramway terminus which led down to the relocated Milsons Point Ferry Wharf.

To accommodate the construction workshops of Dorman Long, builders of the Bridge, the Milsons Point passenger terminal was moved back towards Lavender Bay in 1924/5 and the vehicular ferry was moved east to Jeffrey St, Kirribilli. Escalators, Australia’s first, were installed to move people up the cliff face to Alfred St from the shores of Lavender Bay. The new terminal, together with the adjacent railway station, was connected to a relocated ferry wharf by means of covered walkways and escalators.

**Take steps on right (between Nos. 6 and 6a Glen St) to Luna Park.**

The steps here in Glen St mark the approximate location of Fish St which disappeared with the construction of the North Shore railway line.

**Walk left along boardwalk and enter Luna Park to view Coney Island and Crystal Palace**

Modelled on amusement parks in the USA, Sydney’s **Luna Park** opened in 1935. Most of the rides and structures had been moved up from Glenelg, South Australia, where the Park had operated for four years before closing after locals protested against the noise and disruption. The Lavender Bay site was chosen when Luna Park’s owner visited Sydney searching for a new home for the amusement park. The former Dorman Long workshops occupied the site from 1924 to 1932 for the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The wharf used by the boats to ferry the equipment and workers to and from the bridge can be seen along the boardwalk surrounding Luna Park.

Luna Park’s fantastical architecture draws on many styles. The towers framing the face are copies from the Chrysler Building in New York, the cream coloured Crystal Palace further along the waterfront is derived from European chalets while Coney Island at the far end of the Park features Moorish domes. Coney Island remains an extraordinary remnant of the 1930s amusement hall. While much of the style was derived from overseas, the Coney Island murals by the resident artist Arthur Barton gave Luna Park a distinctly Australian character. This carnivalesque quality sits in stark contrast to the presence of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – yet both have been viewed as quintessentially Australian icons.
At a time when many of its progenitors in the USA were closing down in the midst of economic Depression and competition from cinemas, Sydney’s Luna Park was an instant success upon opening in 1935.

The biggest attraction in North Sydney, the whole of Sydney, was Saturday night at Luna Park, or the Trocadero, or dancing somewhere, and the biggest attraction of the year was New Year’s Eve at Luna Park. They used to open all night. They’d go right through ‘til dawn. And you couldn’t move. There were hundreds, there was thousands and thousands of people.

Jack Sullivan, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection,

Since the 1970s Luna Park has had a chequered history with the disastrous Ghost Train fire in 1977, and a series of management changes. In the 1980s the Friends of Luna Park formed to save the place from neglect and redevelopment. In 1990, the State Government passed the Luna Park site act and formed the Luna Park Reserve Trust. A plan of management was prepared for the site, launched and exhibited at Stanton Library. Luna Park was reconstructed between 1993 and 1994 with some new rides and attractions but with many of the old favourites restored, such as Coney Island. The Park reopened with fanfare in January 1995, only to close again due to local complaints about noise pollution surrounding the star attraction – The Big Dipper. Luna Park re-opened in 2003 with a circus big top, and many new and old rides.

Return via boardwalk to rear of Luna Park

North Shore Railway Line and Viaducts
The Lavender Bay Railway Line seen here at the rear of Luna Park includes a multiple track section of Marshalling Yards that extend westwards from Luna Park along the south eastern shore of Lavender Bay. The yards area includes remnants of the 1915 and 1924-32 Milsons Point Stations, and the site of a carriage shed which formally existed where the northernmost set of tracks run today.

The construction of the railway line in the 1890s was to have a devastating impact on the foreshore landscape and thriving Milsons Point community. Several stone and timber cottages, boatsheds, wharves and gardens were demolished. Alderton’s lime kilns, including the wharf where arrivals of shells from Brisbane Waters were received, was also resumed and demolished.

Fish St disappeared completely from maps, whilst closer to the Point, then named Palmer and Water Sts terminated abruptly at the new escarpment created by major excavation.


Return to boardwalk and enjoy the popular waterfront walk from Milsons Point to Lavender Bay
Amidst the grevilleas and banksias planted on the right hand side you will see Art Barton Park, named after the renowned artist of Luna Park. Arthur ‘Art’ Barton worked as an artist at Luna Park from 1935, the year of the park’s opening, until 1970 when he retired. In the early 1950s he redesigned the entrance and created the welcoming clown-like face that became the iconic image of Luna Park. He came to be regarded as one of the finest exponents of fairground art in Australia.

A major feature of the pocket park is a small bronze sculpture, designed by cartoonist Michael Leunig and sculpted by Lavender Bay artist Peter Kingston. This sculpture was installed as a memorial to the victims of the Ghost Train Fire and the sandstone block bears their names.

**Continue walking along boardwalk.**

Keep an eye out on your right amongst the garden for a series of small sculptures by Lavender Bay artist and long time resident Peter Kingston.

Peter Kingston is a local artist and long-time member of the Friends of Luna Park. Peter worked tirelessly to preserve the fabric and atmosphere of Luna Park from the 1970s to 1990s. In 2002 he cast and installed a series of small statues commemorating some of the best-loved characters from Australian popular culture from the early 20th century. Nestled amidst the shrubbery you will find in sequence: Bib and Bub, Ginger Meggs, the Magic Pudding, Felix the Cat, Luna Park Face, Boofhead, Blinky Bill and a Hegarty’s Ferry.

**Continue to the old ferry wharf on the left. You are at the head of Lavender bay. Out to your right is McMahons Point**

Small boats carried passengers across the waters between Sydney and Blues Point well before formalised ferry services were established. The Point is depicted on early survey maps with a boat harbour and wharf. Watermen, such as Billy Blue (for whom Blues Point is named), offered passenger facilities at a price. With a captive audience these ferrymen plied their trade offering varying degrees of service - some were noted for their bad temper and unpleasant manner, others for extracting unreasonable fares. Their boats were thought to be unsafe and unkempt. Not a satisfactory situation for a growing township and the demands for a proper ferry service were increasing in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1842 a regular service was established between Blues Point and Windmill Street, Dawes Point with the Princess, a steam punt designed to carry passengers and vehicles. This was replaced by the Ferry Queen in 1845.

A public wharf was officially gazetted on 10 October 1871 (*NSW Government Gazette No 247*) in response to deputations made by the Borough of Victoria. The Borough continued its push for better services to its shores and in 1888 approached the State Government –
to provide suitable accommodation for the whole of the North Shore traffic on the Sydney side of the harbour and more especially for the contemplated ferry at Blues Point…

Lavender Bay ferry wharf and baths, c.1888. Photograph by Henry King. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, PF 324)

In 1884 an all-night ferry service operated between Circular Quay and the north shore stopping at Milsons Point, McMahons Point and Lavender Bay. From 1906 Sydney Ferries ran services at 15 minute intervals and every 10 minutes at peak hour. Whilst Milsons Point was by far the busiest of North Sydney’s ferry wharves, the McMahons Point and Lavender Bay service was a popular and busy transport route carrying over 6,000,000 passengers per annum before the opening of the Bridge. By the 1930s steam ferries were berthed at the Point and the wharf bustled with activity – coal loading, water tanks and other infrastructure to support the steam ferries.

(below left) Painting by Brian McCauley. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF 196)

The opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1932 dramatically changed cross-harbour travel. Demand for ferries declined. The government-run ferry service took much of the remaining business while some privately owned ferry services managed to survive until the new century. Hegarty’s small white ferries were a feature of the McMahons Point and Lavender Bay route. They went out of business in 2003. Lavender Bay Wharf, 1988.

Lavender Bay Baths

The former baths were established at the head of the Bay on this site in the early 1880s by ex-Royal Navy and champion swimmer, ‘Professor’ Frederick Cavill. All of Frederick Cavill’s children became champion swimmers, the most famous being Dick Cavill, who reputedly invented the ‘crawl’ or freestyle stroke in Lavender Bay.

The area had long been used for public bathing. In 1866 James Milson, whose property overlooked the bay, unsuccessfully attempted to curtail swimming by claiming ownership of the foreshore. His case was rejected and the tidal beach remained in public use until it was destroyed with the construction of the Milsons Point to Waverton rail line. The original bathing enclosure and later pile baths were located east of the foot of Walker Street and the Lavender Bay Wharf (below present day Clark Park).

Nonetheless the baths that had been established remained and in 1905 was joined by a second structure, ‘the finest Baths structure in Australia’, to the west of the wharf. This was a two storey wooden building housing baths that boasted three diving boards, two showers, change rooms, a refreshment saloon and club rooms. By the mid 1930s, the baths were in
need of repair and showing signs of its age. Much controversy surrounded the baths at this time - loved by many and called a ‘blot on the landscape’ by others. Their ongoing usefulness was brought into question after the opening of the North Sydney Olympic Pool in 1936. It was thought that this new pool would replace the old baths, but while attendance did decline, many local residents still preferred the old baths to the modernity of the inland pool. The wooden baths were demolished in the mid-1970s.

We used to swim there all the time... I can remember when we finished and we’d had a shower, we’d take these little woollen costumes - oh, they must have been dreadful - and we’d wash them under the tap and wring them out and then roll them really tight in our towels to take them home for our mother. We used to have great times there

Millie Rea, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection

A plaque commemorating the Lavender Bay Baths can be found on the rock face adjoining the railway viaduct.

Continue around to the two plaques which commemorate boatbuilding in Lavender Bay

The remains of the Neptune Engineering slipway survive at the western end of the head of the bay. Directly behind this, in a small shelter obscured by trees and a wall, is the winch machinery shed.

Lavender Bay

In the early nineteenth century, Lavender Bay was known as Hulk Bay after the ship ‘The Phoenix’ which was moored here to house convict. Prior to that it was called Quibaree Bay after the Aboriginal word for spring of fresh water. By the 1850s it was called Lavender Bay after the boatswain on the ‘The Phoenix’, George Lavender. In 2004 Council adopted the dual name Lavender Bay and Gooweebahree – the updated spelling of Quibaree.

In the 1840s the Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell thought the Bay would be an ideal site for servicing naval vessels. This did not eventuate but boat building was established in the 1870s when William Dunn set up a business on the western side. Small boat yards also sprang up on the eastern shore. In the twentieth century, it became a thriving strip of engineering workshops, launch and yacht building yards.

W.L. Holmes & Co. William Holmes initially set up business on the Neptune Engineering site at the mouth of the Bay but moved to McMahons Point in 1904. Holmes became one of the most famous of the North Shore boat builders. They built yachts, trawlers and lighters and did a great deal of work for the navy during World War Two:

We worked probably seven days and seven nights a week during the war. Every ship that came in had a wooden life boat on. There was not a wooden lifeboat that would have floated. I remember them burning the paint off some of the lifeboats and we’d come to the grey from the First World War underneath.

Reginald Holmes, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection

The last major boatbuilding and engineering yard in Lavender Bay was the Neptune Engineering and Slipway Co. For almost a century, this site was used for boatbuilding and ship repairs. Four generations of the Meredith family have worked in this business which closed its Lavender Bay operations in 1989. It was this boatbuilding family that designed and
built the first diesel engine in Australia. Like Holmes, they were extremely busy during WWII. **Bob Gordon**, one of the last boatbuilders of wooden boats left in Sydney, built his last boat at the Neptune site prior to the site’s redevelopment. Today the slipway can be seen along with some of the original equipment used to slip boats for maintenance and repair work. Sadly Bob passed away in 2006. After the Neptune site was redeveloped in the 1990s Bob able to lease a workshop beneath the railway viaduct, and with his son Robert continued to build timber boats by hand. Their last boat was launched in late in 2005.

A tribute to Bob, 2006. Photograph by Penny Lang. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF 952)

The thing that’s always struck me about Lavender Bay, is that you can just cast your eye across the water and see this other world of an intense CBD and, of course, the drama of the rumbling of the Harbour Bridge... and Lavender Bay is such a tucked-away, secretive idyllic spot to observe all this. You can incorporate more feelings about the world by standing on the waterfront in Lavender Bay and looking across Walsh Bay and Circular Quay that I think you could... get from man’s creations around Australia.

Bob Gordon, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection

Lavender Bay by Elaine Coghlan, 1930s. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF 295)

**Turn under the viaduct via Lavender Cres and enter Watt Park**

Beneath the viaduct was Mrs Twitty’s shop opposite Watt Park. Veronica Hanna, who lived nearby at Berowra from 1920 to 1942 recalls Mrs Twitty selling lollies, newspapers, cigarettes and matches to people catching the ferry from the Lavender Bay Wharf.

**Watt Park**

This delightful park is nestled between the Lavender Street escarpment and the railway viaduct. It is named after the late Alderman Charles William Watt who was an alderman 1907-1910, and 1917-1926 and Mayor of North Sydney 1923 to 1926. He was also the Chairman and member of the Parks Committee. He died 19th May 1938 aged 75 years.

It was described in 1930 as being “more than a park – it is an idyllic bit of the old world which must have been fashioned or brought out from rural England with first fleet”.
Watt Park includes land originally granted to William Blue in 1817 by Governor Macquarie and land which was part of a grant made to Thomas Walker in 1832.

The lower portion of the park (the extreme western head of Lavender Bay) was dedicated to the Council by the Commissioners for Railways at in 1921. The remaining portion was dedicated to Council in 1930 after an abortive and mis-timed subdivision of the railway lands.

A portion of Watt Park was resumed in 1935 to form the present roadway from Lavender Cres and a pathway from Waiwera St.

Watt Park was the site of two houses originally built possibly during the 1840s or early 1850s, by merchant, John Carr who moored his fleet of schooners at the head of then named ‘Hulk Bay’. Neepsend and Hellespont were demolished in the 1920s following an unsuccessful 1921 subdivision of the ‘Lavender Bay Estate’, by the Railway Commissioners of New South Wales.

To let that delightfully situated marine residence, at the head of Lavender Bay, and known as Hellespont Cottage, containing good dry cellars, four rooms on the first floor, and food bedrooms above; detached stone kitchen, servants’ room over; wash house, coachhouse, and stable; a beautiful garden in the front, extending down to the water; wharf and store, and a jetty out to deep water. The back ground is laid out as an ornamental shrubbery, with plenty of good water. Sydney Morning Herald 7/11/1857

The adjoining house was known as Neepsend and also owned by John Carr. Both houses were advertised to let in 1859, Neepsend described as “a delightfully situated family residence with 7 rooms, detached kitchen, cellargage, etc.” Neepsend was the former residence of John Carr. After his death the property was left to his adopted son Jacky Carr. The magnificent gardens of both waterfront properties were attributed to John Carr: [He] bought trees and plants from afar, and his garden was widely famed for its beauty and variety. Sydney Morning Herald 5/9/1936

The gardens of both houses were partially resumed in 1893 with the construction of the railway line to Milsons Point. By the early 1920s both houses were in a neglected state, being used as a boardinghouse, but were eventually demolished, opening the way for the present pretty park.

The loveliest little nook around the harbour was the little dingle at the head of Lavender Bay…where a pristine crystal spring pulred down to the seas, the early colonists planted the most beautiful shade trees they could obtain, and for as long as they lived tended them with loving care…The old homesteads built [amongst the trees] grew out of date and were demolished but the trees lived on and cast a wider shade. Sydney Morning Herald, about 1930

Today Watt Park retains several significant remnant trees from the former gardens and include Hoop Pines, Cooks Pines, Norfolk Island
Pines, Chinese Cabbage Palm, a Kauri Pine and Sydney Red Gums.

**Continue along Lavender Cres parallel to railway line until you reach the Walker St steps**

On your left is the two storeyed Victorian house named Berowra. The house was built in 1889 and occupied by Charles Wallis a stockbroker until 1904. It was then purchased by William Walsh until 1907 and then acquired by the Commissioner for Railways and established as the Milsons Point Stationmasters residence in 1920. George Schweinsberg was appointed stationmaster at Milsons Point in 1920 and the family moved into 'Berowra' in July that year. Prior to this it had been used as a boardinghouse.

George Schweinsberg was appointed the first stationmaster at Wynyard in 1932 but the family continued to live at Berowra until he retired in 1942. Veronica Hanna was seven years old when the family moved here to Lavender Bay. Everyone used to love to come to Berowra. They were all envious of us living in such a lovely home.

Veronica Hanna, Merle Coppell Oral History Collection

**Continue up path beside Berowra and turn left into Walker St. Ascend the first flight of steps then cross over via path to the other side of Walker St. Turn right and descend steps until you reach the path to Wendy Whiteley’s gardens**

Over the past 11 years, Wendy Whiteley (widow of artist Brett Whiteley) has conjured a secret garden from the public wasteland sloping down to the railway. Steps made from discarded sleepers lead down past sculptures camouflaged by tropical foliage and the shadow of a giant Moreton Bay Fig. Somewhere amid this oasis of calm, Brett Whiteley's ashes are scattered.

Interviewed on ABC by Caroline Jones, Wendy Whitely commented that: the garden is one of the things that gives me a feeling that life’s worth living, that it is worth getting through the hard nights and the lonely moments and the sadness about the past. It’s about life.

The gardens are established on surplus railway land used as a landfill originally, for the construction of the viaduct and rail line to Milsons Point. Over the years it had become an impenetrable and dangerous area used as a rubbish dump. Wendy commenced rehabilitating the land commencing at the Walker St end and working her way through to the rear of the railway marshalling yards.

**Continue walking through the gardens until you reach stairs to Clark Park at the end. Turn left and follow path back to Walker Street**

Along the path between Walker St and Clark Park are a group of three sculptures installed by Wendy Whiteley and Peter Kingston. These are the 1974 bronze sculpture entitled 'Head' by Joel Ellenberg, a marble sculpture by du Bourg installed in 1981 and a bronze cast tea pot by Peter Kingston based upon the work of his friend Edward Moss entitled ‘A Nite to Remember’ created in 1987.

**Lavender Bay as Artist’s Colony**

Lavender Bay attracted fine artists throughout the 20th century including Percy and Norman Lindsay, Lloyd Rees and a group of artists in the
1970s comprising Peter Kingston, Brett Whiteley, Tim Storrier, Joel Elenberg, Tom Carment and Gary Shead.

Joel Elenberg, painter and sculptor, born in 1948 in Sydney. He had no formal art training. Elenburg exhibited at Australian Galleries, Melbourne and is represented in the Dunedin Art Gallery, and at the University of Melbourne. He died in 1980 in Bali. One of his sculptures is located opposite the foot of the Whiteley House.

Tom Carment was born in Sydney in 1954 and studied at Julian Ashton's Art School in 1973. Tom has been painting landscapes and portraits ever since. He is also a writer whose stories and essays have been published nationally. Tom Carment's work has been shown since 1974 in eighteen solo and numerous group exhibitions, mainly in Sydney. His work is held in public and private art collections in Australia and overseas including the Art Gallery of N.S.W. and the State Library of N.S.W.

Garry Shead was born in Sydney in 1942 and is currently regarded as one of Australia's finest painters. He has featured in 50 solo shows and won the Archibald Prize for portraiture in 1993. Garry has been a cartoonist, a filmmaker, an editor, a scenic artist and a printmaker.

Turn right at Walker St steps, ascend path

Whiteley House, No. 1 Walker St
This prominent Lavender Bay landmark was built in 1907 by Henry Green, builder and alderman, and named Lochgyle. The house was owned and occupied by storekeeper Abraham Wallis Taylor from 1908. He converted the house into two flats in 1918.

The house is notable as the residence and studio of artist Brett Whiteley. He was born in 1939 and died at Thirroul in 1992. Brett lived here with his former wife Wendy Whiteley after returning to Australia in November 1969. They converted it back into a single residence and had the tower constructed in late 1974.

The tower was another piece of lateral (or vertical?) thinking by the Whiteleys. Wendy explained it was a nondescript house which they wanted to make more distinctive.

The Australian, 13/14-6-1981

(North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF192)

Following their return to Sydney in late 1969, the Whiteleys set up house in Lavender Bay where Whiteley painted such familiar icons as the winner of the 1976 Archibald Prize, Self portrait in the studio, 1976. It was also where he painted the haunted portrait of his close friend, Melbourne artist Joel Elenberg, Portrait of Joel Elenberg, 1980, who was dying of cancer.
Whiteley moved his studio from the gasworks at Waverton to downstairs here in 1975.

**No. 3 Walker St**
Associated since the 1970s with artist Peter Kingston. He relates the story, “I had arrived back earlier and was led, by the Whiteley’s to premises at Number 3 Walker Street, Lavender Bay. I shared rooms with the painter Tom Carment overlooking Sydney harbour. It was an unpretentious two storey Edwardian residence. Christine Oliver and her partner, the architect Tom Barber and their son Ulysses were ensconced in the top level of the house. The Whiteley’s lived next door at Number 1. Tim Storrier and his wife Sharon later moved into a house two along, at Number 7”.

With the death of his father in September 1974, Kingston came into a modest inheritance which allowed him to purchase the lower level of No. 3 Walker St. He eventually purchased the top level, consolidating his living quarters with studio space.

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In the garden opposite the entrance to No. 3 Walker St is a cast bronze sculpture of Ginger Meggs by Peter Kingston and installed as a memorial to friend Scott Edmunds.

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**Continue up steps in Walker St. Turn left along Lavender St.**

**Further along Lavender St look down to Lavender Cres on your left**

**Quiberie, Lavender Cres**
Matthew Charlton senior (on behalf of his son) purchased the George and Susannah Lavender grant in 1848 and proceeded to commission local stonemason William Montgomery to build for him a Georgian style sandstone and slate house completed in 1855. Matthew Charlton junior and his family moved in immediately. Robert Gilfillan leased the house from the mid-1860s to 1873 after which Matthew Charlton junior moved back to Quiberie until 1886.

The Charlton junior family returned again, but left Quiberie at the close of 1886, letting the property to a Thomas Stokes. They returned to the house in 1891 where Matthew Charlton junior died in 1907. Ralph Charlton continued to live here until his own death in 1908 after which time his brother Albert let the house to Misses Amy and Beatrice Pullen who turned the sandstone villa into a boardinghouse.

The house was sold in 1916 to Mrs Ellen Banks, and then resold to Miss Maud McMullan in 1920 who let the property to Mrs A Sheean. The property was then sold to David Birch in 1924 and let to Mrs R Wallace in 1932. Quiberie was eventually purchased by artist and musician Joyce Trickett in 1963 who lived here till her death in 2001.
View from Lavender Bay to Sydney Harbour Bridge, 1930s. Shows ‘Quiberie’ left foreground. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, PC 186)

From here you gain a wonderful view of the harbour and city skyline, dominated by the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Continue walking along Lavender St to Waiwera St

Nos. 19-21 Lavender St
Pair of adjoining houses (Hillcrest and Inverness respectively) built about 1859 by John Carr who owned and resided in Neepsend below the cliff at the head of Lavender Bay. The houses are listed in a ‘to let’ advertisement in 1860 in the Sydney Morning Herald as two of “three delightfully situated family residences”.

When John Carr’s Lavender Bay Estate was put up for auction in 1878, No. 19 Lavender St was described as a residence “of solid masonry… [which] has verandah at side and rear, and contains 7 large room, kitchen, store pantry etc.”

Both houses were purchased in 1881 by John and Jessie Cliff. In 1897 Henrietta Matilda Lister purchased no. 19 as her home very conveniently located as she and her sister ran swimming lessons for women at the nearby Lavender Bay Baths. After her death the house was sold to an investor Solomon Goldman and until 1922 is rented out to various tenants.

After Lieb’s death, builder James Sheean is the new owner/occupant. In 1926 he submits a successful building application to NSMC to convert the property to four flats. After his death in 1944 some members of the family continue to occupy the property and his family most likely removed the slate roof of the original gabled section of the house, removed the timber bargeboards and terminated the original chimneys below the new roofline. The house was restored in the 1990s.

The block of flats called Kareela, No. 7 Lavender St was the site of an earlier large home called Waiwera. According to local historical G V F Mann, Spring House was occupied by Mr Molineux and family, and later by Captain Sayers. Subsequently rebuilt by Mr Cliff and renamed Waiwera.

The house was purchased by Government Railways and Tramways in the 1890s for the construction of the North Shore railway line to Milsons Point. In 1921 it was one of four houses offered for sale in conjunction with the Lavender Bay Estate subdivision. At that time it was described as “a substantially built and commodious residence of brick on stone foundations, cement rendered and painted, slate roofs, except to rear balcony and bathroom”.

The house was demolished to make way for the present block of flats erected in 1966.

At Waiwera St cross over Lavender St to Miller St. Continue uphill and turn right into Mackenzie St
St Francis Xaviers Church

St Francis Xavier’s was designed by architect and local parishioner William Wardell to function as a church and school. It operated solely as a church from 1901. Regarded as a masterpiece of Gothic design it was nonetheless remodelled in the early 1960s to accommodate the growing congregation.

Fathers Dalton and Kennedy purchased three acres of land above Lavender Bay from Francis Lord to build St Francis Xavier’s Church and school. With St Peter’s Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Christ Church nearby it was a busy religious precinct – well placed to serve the growing waterfront population.

This 1881 lithograph above clearly shows the building’s spire, rose window and masonry – the product of locally quarried stone. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, LPF 767)

The vacant land was developed as tennis courts in the 1920s. Air raid shelters were dug in the grounds for the school children during World War Two.

Backtrack to Miller St and enter St Peters Park. Continue uphill to Blue St intersection and cross at traffic lights and enter church gates

St Peter’s Presbyterian Church

Crown grant of land was made to the Church of Scotland for the Presbyterians of the North Shore in 1844. The first building erected was a temporary wooden structure used as a school during the week and a place of worship on the Sundays. At that time ministers travelled over from Sydney to supply services and other ordinances.

The old stone schoolhouse across the road in Miller Street was erected in 1863. The present church was commenced between 1863 and 1869 under the first settled Minister Reverend Cunningham Atchison. The original section of the church was opened in 1866 and enlarged in 1881 and partly remodelled in 1919. The adjoining manse was built in 1871, whilst the church hall across the road next to the schoolhouse was opened in 1891. The church lands (the glebe) were leased and the row of terrace houses built.

Return back to Blue St

Old quarry/40 Miller St

Opposite St Peters Church at the intersection of Blue and Miller Sts was an old quarry filled with water that is clearly seen in several early photographs looking south to the harbour from North Sydney. The AMP office building was constructed on this site in 1958 in record time. It was demolished in about 1990 and replaced by the present Mirvac building.

Walk up Blue St, cross over William St and enter grounds of SCEGS Shore

The Holtermann panorama is one of the most impressive Australian photographic achievements of the nineteenth century. Taken in 1875 by Bernard Otto Holtermann and his assistant, Charles Bayliss, the panorama
comprises 23 albumen silver photographs which join together to form a continuous 978-centimetre view of Sydney Harbour and its suburbs. The photographs were taken from a specially constructed tower built by Holtermann at his home, The Towers, in Lavender Bay on Sydney’s North Shore.

Holtermann and Bayliss used the collodion ‘wetplate’ process, so called because the glass plate negative was coated with an emulsion of collodion and, while still wet, was exposed in the camera and then developed.

According to the National Gallery of Australia, “The appeal of the panorama lay both in its sheer impressive size and in the clarity of the photographs which, as Holtermann wrote, ‘showed distinctly All the Principal Buildings of Sydney and Suburbs for a distance of 4 Miles and more accurately than can be seen with the naked eye’”. (Panorama of Sydney and suburbs from North Shore, 1875 by Charles Bayliss – Courtesy: State Library of NSW)

Bernard Holtermann had purchased the land in 1873 and erected his grand Victorian Italianate residence, The Towers. After his death it was purchased by the Church of England in 1888 and converted to the Sydney Church of England Grammar School. The house was substantially rebuilt in the 1930s.

Our Art of Lavender Bay walking tour ends here at SCEGS Shore.

These walking tour notes were compiled by the Historical Services team for History Week 2008 from resources held in the North Sydney Heritage Centre, Stanton Library. Ph: 99368400