

From Milson to Medium Density

A walking tour of Kirribilli

Distance: **4.6 Km**
Approximate time: **3 hours**
Grading: **medium to high**



Introduction

Kirribilli is located on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour with spectacular views of the City of Sydney, the Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. Kirribilli is a remarkably diverse suburb, far more so than 'outsiders' would assume. Kirribilli is one of Sydney's most desirable addresses with both modern apartments and large homes surviving from the 1800s and early 1900s. It is home to the Prime Minister and the Governor General. Yet the suburb still has a significant population living in Housing Commission flats, private hotels, hostels and boarding houses. The result is an area of highly diverse building stock spanning over 150 years, from the 1840s through to modern apartment buildings and townhouses.

Kirribilli was originally part of land granted in 1794 to Samuel Lightfoot, a convict whose sentence had expired. Evidence suggests he never occupied the land and soon afterwards illegally sold it to Scottish martyr, Thomas Muir, who established a farm there in 1794 (further up the north shore). After Thomas Muir escaped from the Colony in 1796 the grant was retracted and reverted to the government. Eventually 30 acres of Lightfoot's grant was included in the 120 acre grant to Robert Ryan, a member of the NSW Corps. Around 1806 he sold his land to Sydney merchant, Robert Campbell, then the largest private owner of cattle in the colony. In 1822 Campbell leased the whole area to James Milson, the first white person to settle there. Milson supplied ships in Sydney Harbour with fresh provisions and water, as well as ballast from a quarry near Careening Cove. He also proceeded to build several homes including Brisbane House, Grantham, Wia Wia, Elamang and Coreena. In the mid-1830s Milson and Campbell disputed their title to the land. Campbell was eventually recognised as the



owner without registered title and Milson the permissive occupant.

In the late 1830s and the early 1840s portions of Kirribilli Point were developed and marine villas erected. Among the earliest were Wotonga (now Admiralty House), Beulah, Woodlands (later Thuelda) and Carabella. Further development though was hampered by the lack of regular and cheap ferry services, and so early settlers of the area were largely merchants and colonial administrators who were attracted to the north shore for the cleaner air and environment and proximity to the city. These gentlemen could afford to pay private watermen to transport them between both shores.

Further subdivision of the land in the late 1850s attracted more professionals and commercial people. With the formation of the North Shore Steam Ferry Company in 1861, and the subsequent provision of cheap and regular ferry transport, the development of Kirribilli Point and the North Sydney area quickened. The construction of a road network and services such as piped water supply, gas, schools, churches, along with the promise of a harbour bridge or tunnel crossing from the 1880s, made the area even more attractive. Back from the ferry terminus there were crowded hotels and shops with smaller cottages and terrace houses for local workers.

Kirribilli continued to prosper into the twentieth century with the ***Residential Guide to Sydney and Suburbs***, in 1915 describing it as '*a select rising suburb, situated on the Northern foreshores of Sydney Harbour. There are many handsome residences and fine streets, being of high elevation it commands perfect views of the harbour*'. Despite the ongoing absence of a fixed harbour crossing, the area was just a short ferry ride away and, developers saw opportunities to

build flats and boarding houses. Early flat development around the Kirribilli foreshores offered prime viewing of the Harbour as well as a short ferry commute to work, and home again. One of the first flat buildings was erected on the Kirribilli waterfront in 1907 at 1 Waruda Street and others followed soon after. These buildings often occupied the sites of former large and run-down mansions built during the nineteenth century by wealthy landowners who were selling up or subdividing their properties to take advantage of the rising property prices. Population densities increased further as guesthouses and private hotels also sprang up to take advantage of the suburb's convenient location.

By the 1920s some areas of Kirribilli were regarded as too congested and many welcomed the demolitions that accompanied the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge from 1926. But the Bridge not only removed old building stock, it severely affected the viability of businesses that had gathered around the ferry terminal. The local economic effect of this was compounded by the onset of depression in the 1930s and parts of the suburb were condemned as 'slums'. One response was modernisation through the building of low-income flats. The Greenway Flats, begun a decade later on land cleared during the Bridge construction, were the clearest realisation of this ideal.

Through the 1950s and 1960s private developers also seized upon the ideal of modernisation. Continuing the pattern begun in the early 1900s, they built flats on the site of older housing stock. But, as in other parts of North Sydney, the unprecedented pace and height of this development prompted some residents to question the impact of high-rise buildings upon their suburb's identity and appeal. By the 1970s Kirribilli had one of the

highest population densities in Australia. At the 2001 census only 77 separate houses remained out of the 2414 dwellings located here.

Our walk begins at the entrance to North Sydney station

Note the date '1932' on the parapet above the **Milsons Point Railway Station** entrance. The idea of a bridge across the harbour goes back to 1815 when Francis Greenway suggested a bridge from Sydney to the North Shore. It was not until the early 20th century that the Government called for designs for a cantilever or arch bridge in 1922. The tender of Dorman Long Co. was accepted in 1924 and construction began in 1926 with large-scale resumptions of land and buildings in Kirribilli and Milsons Point. The Sydney Harbour Bridge and Milsons Point Railway Station were officially opened on 19 March 1932.

Walk to traffic lights at junction of Ennis Rd and Broughton St - cross Broughton, turn right and head towards the Harbour

At the corner of Broughton and Burton Sts is **St. John the Baptist Church**, a quaint colonial style church designed and built as a church school in 1884 by well-known ecclesiastical architect, Edmund Blackett. Originally St. John's was a branch church to Christ Church, Lavender Bay, but became a full Parish in 1901. The vestry and sanctuary were added to the church in 1900. A fine feature of the church is the copper overlaid bell tower.

Some residents were unhappy with the church and in 1904 a petition was sent to North Sydney Council asking them to '*prevent the nuisance caused by the incessant ringing of the church bell...we respectfully claim that there is no necessity for any such excessive bell ringing at Milsons Point, as people interested are well*

aware of the hours of church services and also the time of day...we therefore humbly pray that you will take steps to stop this nuisance, or at least limit it to a few occasions, and then not to exceed 5 minutes at each service'. The church nowadays serves two congregations, English and Cantonese speaking parishioners. Former famous parishioners have included Governor-Generals and the Evatt Family.

The adjoining parish hall, now used as a kindergarten, was built in 1909 as the Sunday school hall.

Continue walking down Broughton St towards the Harbour, cross Fitzroy St and continue along to Kirribilli Ave

While the majority of the people on the north side saw the building of the **Sydney Harbour Bridge** in a positive light and a modern necessity, the effects of the widespread neighbourhood demolitions impacted on the social networks of the place. Not only did neighbourhoods break down and disperse, undermining existing community support, but streetscapes were dramatically altered. The western half of Campbell St, for instance, was demolished to make way for the Bridge pylon. The remaining section, where you are now standing was renamed **Kirribilli Ave**. Over 400 buildings, many around the Milsons Point/Kirribilli area, were demolished to make way for the approaches to the Bridge.

'Campbell Street was the first street up from the ferry and there were two sides of the road there and they were packed with houses, and then the next one was Pitt Street and they all went right to where they are now, there's Upper Pitt Street still. It came right up to St. Aloysius College, then Fitzroy Street went. Such a number of houses that went...also in there was factories, an enormous laundry in between the

*houses...between Pitt Street and Campbell...
terrace houses and cottages but well built,
English style in those days you would say..."*

**Florence Innes, Merle Coppell Oral History
Collection**

Cross over Kirribilli Ave to small lookout

Stanton Lookout

Named after Alderman James Street Stanton, Mayor of North Sydney 1938/39 this was part of the Sydney Harbour Bridge residues and was given to Council by the State Government in 1939. Note the name incorporated in the entrance piers at the corner of Kirribilli Ave and Broughton St. Another feature of the lookout is the ornamental coloured cement and stone guard fence - something characteristic of many of the parks and reserves around the North Sydney area from the 1930s.

Proceed along Kirribilli Avenue to Jeffreys St

Across the road from the pathway to Jeffreys Street wharf is **St. Aloysius' College**. The Jesuits established the school at St. Kilda, a house at the corner of Cathedral and Palmer Streets, Sydney in 1878. They then moved to Auburn at Surry Hills in 1883. However those premises were too small for the 160 boys and the school moved across the Harbour in 1903.

The Jesuits purchased Dr. Cox's two storeyed mansion at Kirribilli adjacent to the Star of the Sea Church. A new three storeyed junior school wing, designed by architect J. T. McCarthy, was built on the western of the house in 1909. Both Dr. Cox's house and junior school wing were demolished for the current building in 1970.

Take the pathway down to Jeffreys St wharf on right

Near the **Jeffreys Street Wharf** is a plaque commemorating the vehicular ferry service which began in 1860 between Milsons Point and Fort Macquarie with the double-ended steam punt "Princess". During the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the 1920s the landing was moved to this site in 1925. After the Sydney Harbour Bridge opened in March 1932 the vehicular ferry service ceased and it was converted into a passenger ferry wharf.

Enter Captain Henry Waterhouse Reserve a short way back up the rise above the wharf

On a stone plinth overlooking the Harbour is a plaque on a stone plinth which honours the memory of **Captain Henry Waterhouse**, Naval Officer, (1770-1812) who made a significant contribution to the development of the colony of New South Wales between the years 1788 to 1800. The Waterhouse family donated this land for public use in 1993.

Turn around and look back up the rise to the left to the large flat development

Just above Waterhouse reserve stood **Greencliffe**, a prominent sandstone residence facing the harbour and constructed between 1858 and 1864 for Mrs Mary Paul who ran a boarding establishment nearby in Milsons Point. Various owners made numerous alterations and additions throughout its history. In the 1880s the house was subdivided into two and the eastern wing was named Blink Bonnie. This subdivision took place during the ownership of Paul Talbot, a wealthy wool-broker. The flat building boom of the 1920s saw the beginning of the demise of large single residences fronting the Kirribilli foreshores. *Greencliffe* did not escape this phase and it was converted into 8 flats between 1920 and 1927. In 1950 the property was sold to the Waterhouse family who undertook further

additions providing more flats. In 1993 the remnant building was demolished after an extensive archaeological excavation to make way for the large residential flat redevelopment that occupies the site now.

Look to the right of the modern flats

In 1877 woolbroker Paul Talbot purchased two lots from Thomas Dibbs and proceeded to build houses on both sites. There is some confusion as to the names of these buildings, though it would appear that **Studley Royal** is the grand Victorian 3 storey mansion at No. 59 while **Elsiemere** at No. 55 is the narrow residence next door. This may have been built for family, staff or even as a carriage house. Paul Talbot died around 1887. His widow Mary remained at *Studley Royal* until her death about 1895. David Wilson bought the property from her estate and then sold it to William John Vance in 1901. *Elsiemere* was converted into flats about 1918, and renamed *Studley Royal Flats*.

The flats are entirely in keeping with this attractive local setting; each is entirely self-contained, the accommodation ranging to meet varying requirements and comprising from 2 to 4 rooms and kitchen, no convenience having been overlooked in design and no expense spared in fitting and finish. "Studley Royal" can safely claim equality with any of its compeers in a district which generally attracts somewhat exacting tenants.

(Properties and Premises, 1/8/1918).

The property was purchased by Lionel Bloomfield, grazier, in 1927 who lived in *Studley Royal* mansion until his death in the 1950s. Since then both properties have been used as flats.

Take stairs to the foreshore and continue east along waterfront to Mary Booth Lookout

In 1939 one of the few remaining colonial homes on the Kirribilli waterfront, the **Dingle**, was demolished. It is said that the iron in the house was brought from the Crimea after the war of 1853-56. The house and extensive grounds were sold by A. B. Smith in 1874. The **Sydney Morning Herald** of 22 August 1874, described it as 'a cottage-built residence, having fine wide verandahs on three sides, containing hall, drawing-room, dining-room, breakfast-room, 5 large bedrooms, dressing-rooms, butler's pantry, china closet, store, 3 spacious cellars, large kitchen with range, double patent closets, etc. Never-failing water supply from an underground reservoir and well at the rear...wharf, boat-house, bathing-house...'

Planned redevelopment of the *Dingle* site never occurred and in 1947 local resident, activist and teacher Dr. Mary Booth OBE (1936-1952) lobbied for preservation of the land as public open space. It was bought from developers by the Cumberland County Council and given to North Sydney Council for that purpose in the 1950s. The reserve was named in honour of Dr Booth in 1961. Booth had established the Memorial College of Household Arts and Science at No.63 Kirribilli Ave, providing courses for girls aimed at upgrading the status of housewives. She was awarded an OBE in 1918 for her work. In 1961 funds from the College were provided for the Dr. Mary Booth Scholarship for female economics students at Sydney University.

Enter Waruda St at the top of the Lookout

Originally known as the **Beulah Flats, No. 1 Waruda St** has had a chequered and colourful

history. Built in 1908, *Beulah Flats* was one of the first high rise apartment buildings on the Sydney Harbour foreshores. The property was owned by Mrs Helen White, widow of James White MLC, resident and owner of Cranbrook, Rose Bay, and owner of famous Melbourne Cup racehorse, Carbine. The building was renamed the *Astoria Flats* and contained 171 rooms, a 10000 sq. ft. roof top garden, lounge and billiard rooms, dining room and private sea baths beneath the ground floor.

Mrs White, thrice married and twice titled, left Sydney soon after the building was completed. When she died in the early 1920s she left the Astoria to her stepdaughter Mab McLachlan. In 1928 the property was sold to Emanuel Myerson for £22 500 and renamed *Hotel Braeburn*. The residents of the property were evicted suddenly in October 1930 when the landlady Mrs L. McCormick fell into arrears with her rent: *'faced with the stern realities of having the bailiffs on the premises, of there being no possibility of getting a meal, and of having the carpets auctioned from under their feet at noon, the residents of this fashionable Kirribilli establishment tumbled out in unceremonious fashion'.* (**Evening News**, 22/10/1930)

The flats were renamed a fourth time and became the *Miami Private Hotel*. During World War II the hotel served as accommodation for troops and then later as a boarding house. However in 1975, North Sydney Council declared the once magnificent residential hotel unsuitable for human habitation and the residents were moved to alternate accommodation. The owners undertook a major refurbishment and restoration of the building and the rooms were converted into luxury apartments. With magnificent views in the Harbour, these are now among the most sought after and expensive in Sydney.

Continue walking along Waruda St to pathway to Beulah St Wharf

This was the site of one of the first waterside houses on the North Shore - a substantial two storey stone residence called **Woodlands** built in the 1850s. Philip Adams, Surveyor-General from 1868-1887, purchased the house in the 1860s and renamed it **Thuelda**. He lived here from the 1860s until his retirement in 1887. Three years later the property was sold to J. H. Geddes and Co. *Thuelda* was retained as a manager's residence behind the Pastoral Finance Association wool store which was built in the 1890s. The house was apparently demolished to make way for extensions to the wool store in 1910.

The **Pastoral Finance Association** (PFA) wool store at Kirribilli Point was a waterfront landmark for a quarter of a century. Its elegant stone front extended almost to the waterfront, while electric signs on the roof were a beacon across the Harbour. Each of its seven floors covered half an acre and could store over 30,000 bales of wool. By the 1920s the building was also supplying local residents with electricity through its own generator.

Early on the morning of 13 December a fire broke out in the wool store. The cause was unknown. With an abundance of timber, probably saturated with lanolin and oil from the fleeces, the fire spread quickly. The **Sun** reported that the *'crashing and burning of timber was heard in Sydney across the harbour'*. There were over 100 fire fighters from the combined Metropolitan Fire Brigades and they were assisted by two Sydney Harbour Trust fire floats and 200 navel cadets from the fleet at Garden Island. Neighbouring properties including Kirribilli House were saved but the wool store and its contents, including 32000 bales of wool, were

totally destroyed. The remains smouldered for weeks.

Victor Willis was a young boy at the time. He recalled watching North Sydney's biggest fire instead of going to school:

The PFA was a real big deal. Early in the morning we heard commotion and with our unflinching sense of direction we found our way to the PFA. We knew the PFA quite well because there Admiralty House, Kirribilli House, PFA , and Beulah Flats was a big block of flats. So we found our way there and found a spot of advantage so we could sit and watch... The fire was magnificent. Look the whole place was one great big ball of fire and hot too. It was a spectacle! (Merle Coppell oral History Collection)

The destruction of the building left a large hole in Kirribilli's waterfront development for a few years. The sudden appearance of rare vacant waterfront land after a century of incremental alienation led to calls for resumption and the creation for parkland, including from Dr Mary Booth, Mayor Henry Green and John Sulman President of the Town Planning Association of N.S.W. and others.

Despite this popular pressure the property was eventually sold to developers, and in 1925 the remains of the PFA warehouse, dock and wharf were demolished and the land subdivided into 19 lots for residential development. Today the site is occupied by a number of flat buildings built between 1925 and World War II. The only visible sign of the former use of the land is the foreshore sea wall below the flats in Waruda St adjacent to the Beulah Street wharf.

Cross over Waruda St and turn right up Beulah St. At Kirribilli Ave, turn right and continue along to Carabella

St intersection and Admiralty House gates

No. 4 Carabella St

The Reserve Bank of Australia occupies the former site of a Queen Anne style 2-storey house known as **Ukalanda** built in 1904-5. The building was converted into the **Plaza Private Hotel** in 1928-29. During the extensive alterations, the original simple house disappeared and was replaced by a 3-storey cement rendered pattern tile roofed building with a Neo-Georgian and Spanish Mission style exterior designed by architects Pitt and Morrow. The proprietor of the Hotel was Mrs Duncan McMasters. The property was purchased in 1950 by the Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia for a live-in training school. It was taken over by the newly formed Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959.

In 1986 the Reserve Bank purchased the adjoining properties Nos.8-10 Carabella Street. The Plaza Private Hotel building was demolished and a new building erected, whilst the adjoining federation houses were amalgamated into the new staff training college completed in 1987-88.

Admiralty House, Kirribilli Ave

This house has been a landmark on Sydney Harbour for over 150 years. It is now the official Sydney residence of the Governor-General. In 1842 Colonel J.G.N. Gibbes, Collector of Customs, acquired the land and subsequently built a stone house called **Wotonga**. Gibbes sold the house to J.L. Travers, a Sydney merchant, who in turn sold a portion of the land to fellow merchant, Adolph Feez, who built neighbouring *Kirribilli House* in 1855. In the same year Governor Denison resumed a portion of the land at the point for a fort.

Wotonga was purchased by the State Government in 1885, originally for use as residence of the Naval Commander in Chief. In 1913 the State Government gave the property to the Commonwealth for the use of the Governor General.

Continue a short distance along Kirribilli Ave to entrance gates of Kirribilli House

Sydney merchant Adolf Feez purchased the land in 1854 for £200 from J. Lindsay Travers' adjoining **Wotonga** estate. He built a two-storey Gothic style sandstone house and, shortly after, in 1858 sold it to Esther Hughes for £3000, who purchased it for her daughter Mrs Esther Lawry and son-in-law James Taylor in 1871. The Taylor family lived here until 1908 when it was sold Mr and Mrs McCrea. In 1919 Sydney solicitor A. W. Allen, bought the property and proposed to subdivide *Kirribilli House* and grounds into five lots. Public opposition to the plan led the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, to acquire the property for the Commonwealth Government and during the 1920s *Kirribilli House* was used in conjunction with *Admiralty House* next door as the Governor General's residence or for vice regal staff.

Between 1930 and 1953 the house was leased out to a succession of tenants. In 1956 the Commonwealth Government decided to use the premises as the Prime Minister's Sydney residence and as accommodation for visiting dignitaries.

Since 1979 the Australiana Fund has organised annual open days at both *Kirribilli House* and *Admiralty House*. Many of the items of furniture have been acquired and loaned by the Fund to reflect and continue the gothic style of the exterior of the houses. When John Howard's became Prime Minister in 1996, 'Kirribilli House'

replaced 'The Lodge' in Canberra as the main Prime Ministerial residence.

Continue to end of Kirribilli Ave

Lady Gowrie Lookout

Prior to the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Kent in 1936 Lady Gowrie, the wife of the Governor General, approached North Sydney Council suggesting the beautification of Kirribilli Ave as the main approach to *Admiralty House*. The Council was already planning improvements in Bradfield Park near the northern pylon, and the creation of a small rest park and lookout at the small area bounded by Kirribilli Avenue and Jeffrey and Broughton Streets (Stanton Lookout). Note the plaque dated 1939 attached to the park bench closest to the foreshore.

Lady Gowrie planted a young jacaranda tree in the lookout on 31 August 1944, her last public planting before leaving Sydney to return to England. Lady Gowrie '*expressed her great pleasure at the development of the Lookout and said it would always remind her of her happy associations with the North Sydney Council, and the people of the Municipality*'. (North Sydney Council Annual Report, 1944)

Return up Kirribilli Ave past entrance to Plunkett St

Soma, No. 26 Kirribilli Ave and adjoining properties in Plunkett Street stand on land that used to form part of the curtilage of 'Kirribilli House'. The land on the north side of Kirribilli Avenue [formerly Campbell Street] was subdivided into 11 lots and Plunkett Street was created in 1909. Lots 9-11 were purchased by Alexander Amos, a wealthy grazier from the Glen Alpine District of NSW. He engaged prominent architect, John Kirkpatrick to design a two-storey gentlemen's residence. The stained glass leadlight windows in the entry foyer are

inscribed '*Soma*' and give the date of construction as '*AD 1911*'.

After Amos' death in 1915 his widow continued to live there and upon her death the property was sold in 1937 to Sydney Oscar Beilby, a manufacturing chemist from Adelaide. From 1952 until 1957 *Soma* was run as a guesthouse called *Westward Ho* by Olga Gottwalz. It became the *Kirribilli Private Hospital* from 1959 to 1993. It is now subdivided into residential flats.

Turn right into Carabella St

Nos. 1-3 Carabella St occupies the site of the former grand Federation-style boarding establishment named **Ormiston**. The boarding house was built in 1912 and designed by well-known North Sydney architect Donald Esplin. It boasted a luggage entrance with small lift to the upper floors, billiard room, drawing room and dining room for guests. The boarding house was demolished and the present eight-storey block of flats erected in 1966-67.

Across the road at **No. 12 A Carabella St** is one of the many private hotels located in Kirribilli. John Brannelly purchased lots 5 and 6 from the Clifton Estate about 1908 and proceeded to erect a house on the land. The house, named **Glenferrie** was subsequently leased and occupied by Mrs Nellie McKinnon. Brannelly undertook major alterations and additions to the house in 1923 when it became a guest house. It has operated as a private hotel since that time.

The stone and timber lychgate at the front of **No. 31 Carabella St** was most likely built in 1913. The first portion of **Keston**, a stone and timber house, was constructed in 1875 by George Bowen. He lived there until his death

around 1890. The relatively flat site was probably chosen for ease of access to foreshore by horse drawn vehicles. Henry Campbell purchased the house in 1909 and subdivided some of the land fronting Carabella St. Substantial alterations and additions to *Keston* resulted in a grand Federation residence.

A notable resident of the house between 1904 and 1907 was the Hon. Richard Edward O'Connor, judge of the High Court of Australia appointed in 1903, first president of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court in 1905, and he also served as a Minister for Justice from 1891-1893.

The Commonwealth acquired the property in 1953 for use by Commonwealth Hostels, later the Attorney Generals Department and, more recently, by Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). Extensive alterations were subsequently undertaken, resulting in the demolition of the eastern facade and construction of a two-storey office space over the original wide terrace on the harbour frontage. The 1950s structure on the harbour frontage was demolished and new residential flats built in the mid-1990s.

Turn right into Holbrook Ave

The Holbrook Ave Group comprises several interesting flat buildings, namely '*Walder*', '*Holbrook*', '*Brendalan*', '*Mt. Warwick*', '*Mayfair*', '*Tiverton*', '*Renown*' and '*Huntingdon*', all were erected on the 1913 subdivision of the waterfront property **Holbrook**. This once grand colonial mansion, was described in a 1913 real estate brochure as, '*being exceptionally well built of solid stone, and contains 22 rooms, including a fine billiard room. The house would make an excellent home for a Squatter, Merchant, or*

Retired Gentleman, or could be utilised for many other purposes’.

Holbrook was built about 1875 by merchant George Matcham Pitt. Pitt had started a stock and station agency business in the early 1860s which became G. M. Pitt and Son (later Pitt, Son and Badgery). He died at *Holbrook* in 1896. When the estate was subdivided in 1913, the house remained on lot 7, whilst the adjoining lots were sold and developed over the next 10-15 years. *Holbrook* was eventually demolished and a block of flats, *Huntingdon* erected on the site. Other flat buildings were erected in this street to take advantage of their proximity to ferry services at Kirribilli Wharf and the suburb’s location close to the city.

Sunnyside, No. 11 Holbrook Ave, was formerly called *Wyreepi*. This house was built about 1857 for Robert Hunt, Master of the Royal Mint. Hunt purchased the land from William Maguire in 1861 and shortly afterwards built the original stone portion of the present house. He lived here until 1870, and it was then leased out to a succession of occupants until his widow sold the property to the North Shore Steam Ferry Co. Ltd. The latter subdivided the land and sold the house and most of the grounds in 1901 to Ward Barrett (a small strip of land was retained for access to the harbour for a ferry wharf). Barrett, described as a comedian, owned the house for 9 years but lived there only till 1905 when the Hon. Dugald Thomson took up residence there and renamed it *Wyreepi*.



(below left) Foreshore view to Sunnyside, about 1908. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, PC 623)

Dugald Thomson was the representative for Warringah in the NSW Parliament at successive elections in 1895 and 1898. He stood for and won the newly formed Federal seat of North Sydney in 1901. After he retired from parliament in 1910 he continued to here. During this period he added the Victorian style wing on the southern side of the original house. Thomson died in 1922 and the grounds of the estate were subdivided. The house name reverted to the name ‘Sunnyside’ when, during restoration in 1949, the then owners found that the original bathroom floor was inscribed ‘*Sunnyside 1885*’ in copper studs – the year that water was piped under the Harbour to the North Shore.

Return back up Holbrook Ave, turn right up Carabella St and right again into Peel St

The early history of the house **Carabella** is unclear, but the first recorded occupant is John Edye Manning, followed by Thomas L. Peate; subsequently owned by William Tucker and descendants. Carabella was leased from 1901 by the **Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron** and then purchased in 1903 and extensive additions made. The house may have been built for James Milson Junior. The original *Carabella* was a single storey stone house with a slate roof. Extensions and additions have been made at various times up to the present, enveloping the original house.

Cross over Peel St and walk along Elamang Ave until you reach the Willoughby St intersection

Wrixton, No. 47 Willoughby St is a delightful Victorian timber cottage built about

1888 by the Wrixton Family who also ran a small boat building yard at the foot of Willoughby Street.

Turn right to end of Willoughby St

At the foot of Willoughby St, adjacent to *Wrixton* is a set of flats built on the site of the former **E. D. Pike timberyard**. According to local resident Robert Kirk *‘in the old days, steam boats... they would come up there loaded with telegraph poles and there used to be a big crane up there. It was up in the air and it used to lift the telegraph poles and take them over and put them on the other side. The wharf was stacked with timber’*.

Adjacent to the former timberyard and Patton’s slipways was the site of the first **North Shore Rowing Club** wharf, established in 1879 at the foot of Willoughby Street. The foreshores of Careening Cove are much altered since the 1800s and land reclaimed at the foot of Willoughby Street. The North Shore Rowing Club was forced to relocate in 1890, temporarily to the opposite side of Careening Cove and the in 1903 they obtained a block of land at the head of Careening Cove and erected a new clubhouse there (now the Sydney Flying Squadron). Growth of ferry traffic and choppy waters led the club to relocate to the Lane Cove River in 1933 to take advantage of perfect rowing conditions. The sold the Careening Cove clubhouse in 1937 to the Sydney Flying Squadron.

Return up Willoughby St to McDougall St intersection

The site is owned by the nearby Sydney Flying Squadron from which it is separated by the Ensemble Theatre. The **North Sydney Heritage Study Inventory** notes that **Patton’s Slipways** is the *“oldest and largest remaining*

maritime industry in Careening Cove, once an important boat and ship building and repair location on the North Shore”. Henry Younger operated a boatyard here until the early 1900s. The buildings on the site date from the 1920s. Patton’s purchased the slipway site in the 1960s from the Burns Philp ship merchant company, and the building fronting McDougall Street was originally the administration building for the Burns Philp company.

Continue walking along Willoughby St to Winslow St

Fern Lodge, No. 6 Winslow St is one of only two of the several Milson family homes built during the nineteenth century to have survived (the other, *Elamang*, in the grounds of Loreto Convent). Believed to have been built about the 1840s, the building was restored and used as an advertising agency about 1974.

Cross back over Willoughby St to Carabella St and continue along St

Note the Victorian Terraces and Federation cottages on both sides of the street. The sandstone retaining walls on the right hand side were constructed here due to the steep incline of the land down to Careening Cove. Kerb and guttering and retaining walls were jointly funded by the owner and Council of the time.

The former *Tremayne Private Hotel, No. 89 Carabella St* was built and named after one of the Milson family homes **Tremayne**. The house served as the Young Women’s Christian Association [YWCA] hostel from the 1920s. The current building was erected in front of the original hostel building at Kirribilli in 1938. Escalating maintenance costs in 1978 led to the sale of the former hostel. It was renovated, restored and converted into a private hotel.

Keep walking along Carabella St

Nicholas McBurney, former Mayor of East St. Leonards 1887, purchased this corner block from John and Robert William Campbell in 1875 and proceeded to build the house the same year. During the time he lived at **Burnleigh, No. 48 Carabella St** Nicholas was actively involved in local politics. He was declared bankrupt in 1896 and the house was passed to his wife, Hope. She continued to reside here after Nicholas' death in 1927. The house was then passed on to Elizabeth Annie (nee Tuckey). Upon Elizabeth's death in 1932, it passed to Douglas Hope McBurney. The McBurney family connection ended with his death in 1971 and there has been a succession of owners since.

Loreto is a large private girls high school occupying the house **Elamang** and its grounds. One of the most significant buildings in the area, *Elamang* is one of only two of the many Milson family homes built in the nineteenth century to have survived (the other is *Fern Lodge* in Winslow Street).



Elamang after it became Loreto Convent, c1906. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, PC 581)

Elamang was originally the home of James Milson junior, the eldest son of pioneer resident James Milson. James junior built the house in 1851-52 upon his marriage to Mrs Mary Ann Elizabeth Grimes. James lived here until his

death in 1903, when the property was subdivided and George Powell purchased the house. It was converted into a guest house and run by Mrs Burton. The house was purchased in 1907 by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, better known as *Loreto*. The Sisters had been in Australia since 1875 and had started a school in the Victorian villa *Kanimbla* in Fitzroy St in 1901 and later Fern Hill in Pitt St between 1902-1908.

The Sisters embarked on a building programme at *Elamang*. The stables were demolished, and a two level colonnaded veranda erected around the house. An Italianate bell tower and chapel was erected on the south side of the house. School expansion has resulted on more development. In 1992 the new buildings on the Elamang Ave frontage were opened.

Continue walking along Carabella St, remain on this side of the St**Villa Gardens, No. 32 Carabella St**

On the high side of the street note the sandstone and iron fence and gate, all which remain of Milton, a two-storey mansion built by insurance agent William Goddard about 1882. This house became **Kigwigil** (smiling water), a 'superior boarding establishment featuring large grounds, lawn tennis, electric light throughout, excellent cuisine, hot and cold baths, 10 minutes city' in the 1920s. The house was demolished in the 1960s and the current high-rise apartment building, *Villa Gardens*, erected in its place.

No. 67 Carabella St

The **Quarterdeck** apartments mark the former site of **Miandetta** the North Sydney residence of Sir Edmund Barton, sworn in as Australia's first Prime Minister at the Federation ceremony in 1901. He lived here between 1896 and 1906, a significant time in the establishment of the Australian Commonwealth. This profound

historic association was not enough to curb the enthusiasm for development and modernisation that changed much of Kirribilli in the 1950s and 60s. Miandetta was demolished in 1959.

The *Quarterdeck* units were completed by Civil and Civic in 1961 and are believed to be only the second building in Australia to use aluminium windows. A notable occupant of the flats includes Sir John Kerr Australia's Governor General at the time of the Whitlam government dismissal in 1975.

The history of the site was commemorated during the 2001 Centenary of Federation with the placement of a plaque. (*note: the neighbouring Victorian villa now called 'Miandetta' has no association with the original Barton house*)

Continue to walk along Carabella St to Peel St intersection, cross over Rd

No. 28 Carabella St was originally named **Osterlerly**. The house was built between 1911 and 1913 by journalist Thomas Courtney to the design of well-known architect, John Kirkpatrick (official Government architect for all new Commonwealth Bank buildings throughout Australian in 1912 and architect for returned servicemen's homes from 1918).

The original brick house was converted into two flats in 1951 by the owner Mrs Stossi and the work was undertaken by architects Minnett and Cullis- Hill (the same firm undertook much work for North Sydney Council, including the extensions to the Council Chambers in 1937). Significant structural alterations to the house include the pebbledash stucco of walls, demolition of the original shingled verandas on the Peel Street elevation and the 3 chimney pots converted into one single chimney.

Turn right into Peel St

Nos. 12-24 Peel St

This group of six identical Federation era terrace houses were built in 1898 by Thomas Hastings. They were subsequently purchased by Ninian Paton, an ironmonger from Cremorne, who probably bought them as investment properties. Their names, in order from 15-24, appear in the North Sydney Council Rate Books as 'Surrey', 'Mowbray', 'Taree', 'Glenwood', 'Manhattan' and 'Russley' This relatively intact terrace group are an important element in the Pitt St landscape.



By dining room bay window, Clifton, Kirribilli, 1888. (North Sydney Heritage Centre, PF 2256)

William Tucker, the first mayor of East St Leonards, built the original house **Clifton**, on this site (**Nos. 1-3 Peel St**) as his own home in the late 1850s on land he had obtained from Captain Moriarty. William Tucker had set up a wine and spirit business in 1838 named Tucker and Co. He was also one of the first directors of the City Bank in Sydney and was involved in the formation of the North Shore Steam Ferry Company. Present at the first meeting to incorporate the Municipality of East St. Leonards, Tucker became the municipality's first mayor in 1868. A man of considerable means, Tucker erected a large number of homes in the Kirribilli area for his family including the **Grange**

(No. 69 Upper Pitt Street), **Greenmount** (No. 67 Upper Pitt Street), **Budleigh** and **Endsleigh** (both formerly located in Upper Pitt Street) and **Linton** (formerly at No. 51 Upper Pitt Street). After William died in 1888 *Clifton* was passed to his son Walter.

In 1908 the house underwent an extension by an 'experimental underpinning' which added an extra floor without removing the roof. With an additional 15 rooms *Clifton* was transformed into a boarding establishment and later a nursing home in the 1950/60s. *Clifton* was demolished in 1965-66 and in 1967 two blocks of high-rise flats were built on the site – one block retains the name *Clifton*.

The Grange. No. 69 Upper Pitt St

This is believed to be the second house built for the family of William Tucker, wine merchant, major property owner, developer and first Mayor of East St. Leonards in 1868.

Greenmount, No. 67 Upper Pitt St

Victorian Rustic Gothic two-storey sandstone house with steep pitched gabled roof, was built for William Tucker about 1865. Rachel Henning's brother, E. B. Henning (affectionately known as Biddulph in her letters) married Emily Tucker in November 1872 at Christ Church, Lavender Bay. Rachel had earlier described 'Greenmount' in one of her many letters in 1870: *'Green Mount is looking pretty as ever. It certainly is a lovely place. The garden is full of flowers, but rather wild with the wet weather.'* **(Letters of Rachel Henning)**

Greenmount was subsequently leased to James Robertson Love, a Sydney grocer, between 1871 and 1888. After William Tucker's death in 1888 his extensive property and real estate holdings were passed on to various family members. *Greenmount* was left to Fanny who

lived there from 1909 until 1914. Fanny sold the property to unmarried sisters, Anna and Emma Heilman, who lived there until 1956. It has had a succession of owners since that time.

No. 59 Upper Pitt St

The **Rock-Fort** is evidence of the ongoing development of flats in Kirribilli between the wars. Stylistically it is an Inter-War Georgian Revival apartment building featuring a face brick construction, hipped tiled roof, symmetrical facade, symmetrical placement of windows decorative window lintel details on ground floor, double hung multi-paned timber sashed windows and classical portico at main entry.

Continue walking along Upper Pitt St

Craiglea, No. 49 Upper Pitt St is a large two-storey, late Victorian Italianate mansion occupying a prominent position overlooking the city of Sydney and Sydney Harbour. It is one of only four surviving Victorian freestanding residences remaining in Upper Pitt St, Kirribilli. Edward Lee, a businessman connected with wool brokerage and shipping purchased an allotment in Pitt Street where he commenced to erect a brick house in 1888. Lee had sat as a jurymen on the famous Tichbourne Case in England. He had financial interests in the Pastoral Finance Association which had a large wool store on the foreshores of Kirribilli from 1890 until it burnt down in 1921. Lee's two daughters were granted life tenancy of the house in his will, and they lived in *Craiglea* until 1964. William Waterhouse purchased the property in 1961, alterations and renovations were carried out during 1965-66 to convert the house to a family home for George Waterhouse. The property was subdivided in the early 1990s and a new apartment block built below and fronting Kirribilli Avenue.

Continue walking along Pitt St to St. Aloysius College

This plaque marks the site of the first **Star of the Sea Church** - a beautiful, small stone gothic building which served as a place of worship for protestants, and then for Roman Catholics from 1863 until 1964. The Star of the Sea church story begins in 1862 when George Alfred Lloyd, owner and resident of *Wotonga* (now Admiralty House), held monthly services at his home for his neighbours. The church was completed and the first service held there on 23 October 1863. George Lloyd had personally contributed £500 towards the £1400 cost of the church. Problems with finance and the disastrous ministry of Rev. A. Brown led the parish to erect a new congregational church in Alfred Street, Milsons Point in 1880.

The *Star of the Sea Church* was sold the same year to the Jesuits and it was announced in the Freeman's Journal on 14 August, "*the Catholics in that aristocratic quarter of the Shore have now...a church "agin their own door"*". The church was rededicated in November and in 1903 it also became the chapel for the adjoining St. Aloysius College. However by the 1965 the school announced it was proving '*inadequate for our expanding needs*' and a new chapel was built elsewhere. The old church was briefly used as a craft centre, and eventually the early stone church was demolished in 1978.

Cross over the road at the pedestrian crossing outside St. Aloysius College

Wyalla is a large 2-storey Victorian Italianate house originally built by Leonard Dodds and leased in 1888-89 to T. H. Ivey, Manager for the Bank of New South Wales. Ivey lived there for a short time before prominent Sydney surgeon, Alexander Kinnear Morson, purchased the

property in 1892. After his death at *Wyalla* in 1904, Mrs Morson continued to reside there until 1908. The new owner of the property, Mrs Annie Hutton, converted it into a boarding house and eventually in 1916 the building was sold to neighbouring St. Aloysius' College for the Senior school.

The lawn tennis courts were removed between 1939 and 1955 and the War Memorial Wing was added to *Wyalla* as a brick Science block at the south-east corner and opened by Cardinal Gilroy in April 1954. In 1967 the junior students moved to *Wyalla* and after they transferred to their new site in Burton Street (the former Milsons Point Public School) in 1993 the school undertook renovations and restoration of the house and was officially opened and blessed in February 1997 as the new Senior School.

Continue to end of Pitt St and cross over Fitzroy St

Illingillin, No. 14 Fitzroy St is an attractive Victorian Georgian house on land originally part of the property owned by Henry Hocken Bligh, resident and owner of the adjoining 16-18 Fitzroy Street. The house was purchased from Bligh in October 1885 and the house built in 1886 by Prosper Orlean Williams and Fitzjames Hartwell Williams, the sons of James Hartwell Williams, the first US Consul to the Australian colony.

The **Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre** building has a rich and varied history spanning over 125 years and comprises a pair of large semi-detached Victorian sandstone houses constructed in 1875 for the first Mayor of Willoughby, Henry Hocken Bligh. Henry was married to Elizabeth Milson Shairp (grand-daughter of James Milson) from 1861 and he

lived in number 16 for 29 years until his death on 1904.

From 1912 until June 1974, Nos. 16-18 Fitzroy St was operated as a private guest house named *Trelawney* and later as a low-income boarding house. In 1971 Alderman Robyn Read Hamilton foresaw the need for a community centre in Kirribilli and suggested the properties as a possible site. The houses were purchased in 1974 by the North Sydney Council and in 1977 the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre was opened.

Across the road, **No. 33 Fitzroy St** is the site of a once grand gothic house known as **Ardross**, built for William H Platt about 1866-68. The Platt family moved to the 'bush' near Carcoar in 1874 and the house was leased to various tenants until it was sold in 1889 to Henrietta Noake for £2000. In the early 1900s it was tenanted by St Aloysius' College to provide auxiliary accommodation for the College.

Henry Wood, a member of the local historical society and the photographer who captured *Ardross*, described the house just before demolition in 1961:

The majestic three storey house was still a delight to the eye with its high and acute gables, four-feet high chimney pots...and square Georgian windows. The house was mellowed stone and the builder or architect had an eye for shape and mass. Which ever way one looked at this fine old building it looked an 'aristocrat' – a gentleman's residence and it was only the red brick coach house, added later, that was entirely out of harmony...

(above right) Ardross was demolished in 1961 and replaced by the present block of flats. Photograph by Henri Wood. (North Sydney Historical Society, PF 560/3)

Nos. 20-50 Fitzroy St



Fitzroy St features an attractive group of Victorian and early Federation terrace houses of two and three storeys built for the lower middle and working class families. These contrast with the large mansions built elsewhere in Kirribilli on the earlier subdivisions of Robert Ryan's 120 acre land grant by the family of Robert Campbell.

Continue along to Carabella St intersection

Nottingham, No. 39 Fitzroy St

Florence Innes' aunts built this block of flats on the site of their former family home in 1928. She recalled:

The people who built the flats had also built a block in Upper Pitt Street. It was Depression time and the trouble was because the rents and things had to go down quite a bit. I remember moving in when it was completely empty. There

were fourteen flats...six were two bedroom and six were one bedroom. Right down in the front-they're still there-are two small ones underneath. They used to call those bachelor flats. The rooms were quite ample and high ceilings, even fireplaces you could use. The back ones also had verandas and they had a view over the city part. The top ones of course had the best view naturally, and really it was lovely until a lot more blocks were built at the back of us and that cut off our view of the harbour'. (Merle Coppell Oral History Collection)

Turn left into Carabella St. Continue along and then turn left into Bligh St, right again into Crescent Pl and then left into Burton St

St. Aloysius Junior School

In 1878, 59 residents of Kirribilli and Milsons Point petitioned the Council of Education, for *'the want of a school at Milsons Point... [St. Leonards Public School in Blue Street, North Sydney] is nearly a mile distant and barely large enough for the present requirements of that rapidly extending suburb'*. By 1885 the St. Leonards Public School enrolments had increased from 400 to over 1000, and an Education Department inspector recommended that there were enough children to support a good-sized school at Milsons Point. The Department chose a site in Burton Street and purchased the land for £2150 from Arthur Jeffrey's estate in 1886. The 'East St. Leonards' school was originally designed for 2 departments, primary and infants, and for an average attendance of 350. Government Architect, William Kemp, designed the school which was completed on 1 April 1887 and opened for students on 11 April 1887.

By 1990 **Milsons Point Public School's** enrolments had dropped significantly. It was

closed as part of the State Government's rationalisation of public schools in that year. The site was subsequently purchased by St. Aloysius College and converted into a junior school with the original 1887 building, an important heritage item, retained in the new school.

Cross over at pedestrian crossing and continue along Burton St and right into Broughton St

Kirribilli Hotel, Nos. 35-42 Broughton St

The story of the *Kirribilli Hotel* begins with a much older establishment in Alfred Street near Broughton Street - **Dind's Hotel**. This hotel was used briefly as Council chambers for the Borough of East. St. Leonards. Its famous licensee was William Dind who entertained theatrical types keen to talk about stage triumphs and failures. The building lay vacant during 1920s and was demolished after 1923. A new brick hotel which retained the Dind name was built at 83 Alfred Street, at the corner of Fitzroy Street. This building was resumed for the Sydney Harbour Bridge and demolished in about 1938. The licence was then transferred to this site, and the Kirribilli Hotel was erected, a new art deco style hotel designed by Justelius and Frederick for Tooheys Ltd.

Walk along Broughton St and cross over to Greenway Dve

Greenway Flats

The Greenway flats comprise 308 units which were built between 1948 and 1953 by the NSW Housing Commission. In 1946 the North Sydney Council were informed by the Commission that it was interested in obtaining a vacant site on Ennis Road *'for the erection of multi-storey dwelling units'*, as part of the post-war program of public housing that saw thousands of dwellings built in response to chronic house

shortages. Council objected to the proposal, noting the problem of overshadowing and the need for parkland.

However the land was resumed for development in 1947 and construction began in 1948. Designed by the architects Morrow and Gordon, the 'all-electric' one and two bedroom flats reflected the latest ideas in public housing design being implemented in Europe and the US. The complex was the largest flat development in Australia at the time. It consists of 4 blocks, A,B,C,D. with 122, 22, 128 and 37 flats respectively. The smaller blocks became available for occupancy in late 1952, whilst Blocks A and C were completed in late 1953. Greenway was officially opened on 28 March 1954.

Return to Ennis Rd up the staircase outside Block A and walk left back towards Milsons Point Railway Station

Ennis Road Shopping Arcade/Bays

Before World War II several of the bays beneath the approaches on both sides of the Sydney Harbour Bridge were utilised for shops, factories and workshops. The bays continue to be used in this manner, note for instance the bays reserved by the R.T.A.

The group of shops adjoining the entrance to Milsons Point Railway Station were built under the elevated northern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. There are now only two largely intact shopfronts in the group. These retain their chromium plated steel framed vitrines (windows) with ornate leadlight sections above the door heads and the glazed ceramic tiles below.

Our From Milson to Medium Density walking tour ends here at Milsons Point Railway Station.

These walking tour notes were compiled by the Historical Services team in History Week 2003 from resources held in the North Sydney Heritage Centre, Stanton Library. Ph: 99368400