



historicalwalkingtours

CITY
OF SYDNEY

THE STRIP ON THE STRIP

The stories that inspired the bronze street plaques of Kings Cross

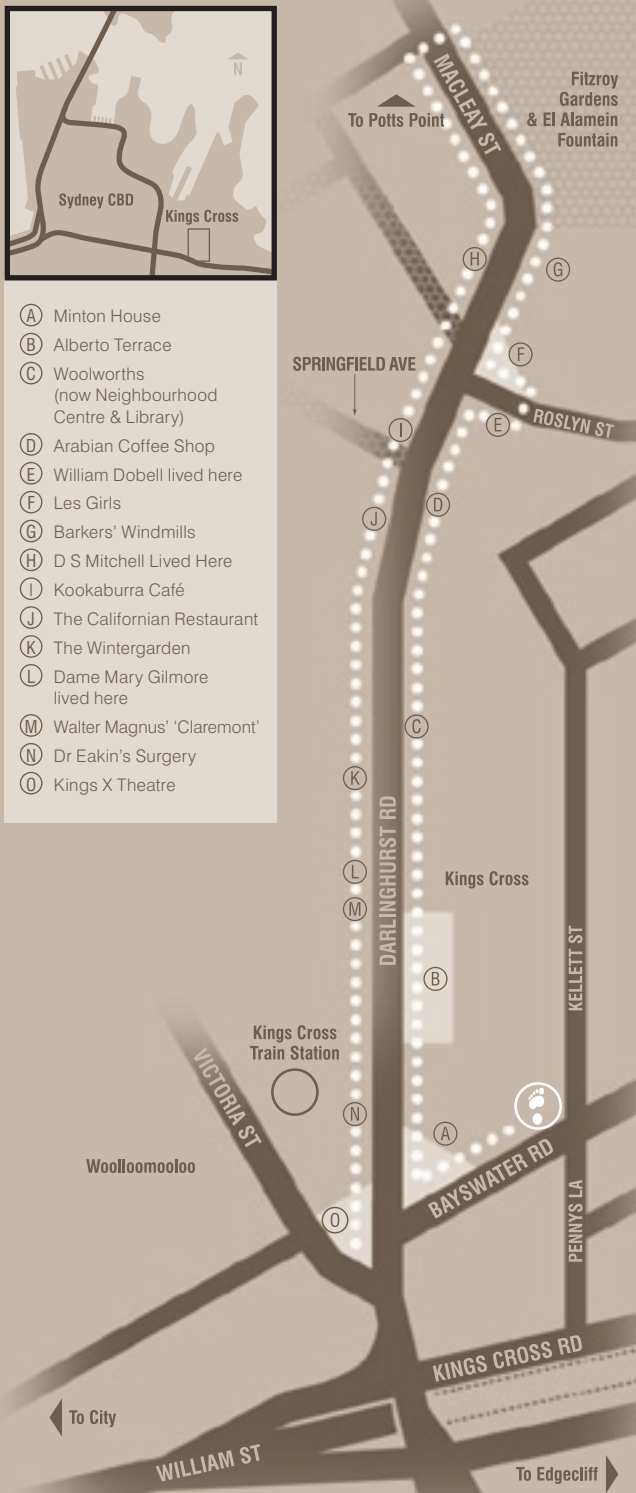


city of villages

The Strip on the Strip



- (A) Minton House
- (B) Alberto Terrace
- (C) Woolworths (now Neighbourhood Centre & Library)
- (D) Arabian Coffee Shop
- (E) William Dobell lived here
- (F) Les Girls
- (G) Barkers' Windmills
- (H) D S Mitchell Lived Here
- (I) Kookaburra Café
- (J) The Californian Restaurant
- (K) The Wintergarden
- (L) Dame Mary Gilmore lived here
- (M) Walter Magnus' 'Claremont'
- (N) Dr Eakin's Surgery
- (O) Kings X Theatre



Over 100 plaques were set into the pavement of Darlinghurst Road, as part of the City of Sydney's upgrade of this streetscape in 2004-5.

The text for the plaques and for this booklet were written by the City Historian, Shirley Fitzgerald.

Dot Dash Pty Ltd designed the plaques. Allan Saxby and Mukesh Malhotra project managed the installation for the City of Sydney.

Kings Cross is one of the City's most famous villages and the strip of plaques set in the pavement along Darlinghurst Road and its adjoining streets highlight some of its unique social history. It is not a list of the 'big names'. It is history, collecting our stories to be passed on to the next generation of residents and visitors. These stories are not always glorious but they are indisputably interesting.

It is also a reflection and celebration of the colour, diversity and wit of Kings Cross; the bohemians and artists, creatives and writers, all those hopefuls, with their dreams and aspirations. And achievements, of which there have been many.

So here it is, an accessible history on the pavement in about a thousand words. A history that could easily take 100,000 words. The broken lines of text symbolize that the story is only fragmentary, while the blank strips indicate that other stories could be added.

This booklet adds to the stories, so take it with you when you go out into Darlinghurst Road and discover some of the fascinating history of Kings Cross.

Clover Moore MP
Lord Mayor of Sydney





You may start your journey anywhere along the strip, but this booklet must begin somewhere, and as good a place as any is at the corner of Darlinghurst Road and Bayswater Road. If you approach from Bayswater Road, or if you take a little detour down it before embarking on Darlo Road, you will notice lettering at the corner of Kellett Street which says this:

AUGUST 1929 • KELLETT ST
 RIOT • SLY GROG TRADERS
 KATE LEIGH vs TILLY DEVINE •
 RIVAL GANGS IN VIOLENT STOUGH •
 RAZORS GUNS BOTTLES STONES •
 WOUNDED DO NOT IDENTIFY
 ATTACKERS TO POLICE

Grog traders

Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine. Tales are legend of their rivalry, which often turned to vicious street brawling, ending in imprisonment or wounding or both. Along with a string of seamy underworld figures and low-life thugs, they belong to a chapter in the history of the city which has long fascinated the inhabitants of less 'colourful' times. The decades of their presence around the inner city haunts have been described as that 'wild, romantic, dreadful period' from which these two women have emerged to settle in the collective memory as flamboyant battlers who made it on the mean streets of inter-war Sydney.¹

They were also plain vicious.

Kate Leigh was born into a poor family. Her father was given to thrashing her and she ran away from home at age ten. A 'good looker', she became a gangster's moll, ever prepared to perjure herself in the courts to protect her various lovers. She would also not hesitate to batter opponents if required, just as her own father had beaten her. She accumulated over 100 convictions and enjoyed 13 gaol terms, some of them lengthy.²

An unnamed detective who worked in the area in the 1940s declared that 'The Cross was run by a well known lady, Kate Leigh, a middle-aged woman who had no fear of anyone', who made her living by selling sly grog and running a prostitution business.

Sly grog is any liquor sold illegally. The trade is likely to thrive at times when there are legal restrictions on the provision of alcohol. From 1916 until the mid-century, weekend and six o'clock closing of pubs, as well as restrictions of supplies to hotels during World War 2, ensured a brisk illegal trade.

At her peak Leigh probably ran 20 or more sly grog places, catering to a variety of clientele. She bottled the beer herself, and employed men who pushed it up William Street in hand-carts to deliver it to various establishments around The Cross. The success of her business was in part because her beer was fresh and uncontaminated.

Leigh occasionally also dealt in other drugs such as cocaine and did a side-line in shoplifting – for the thrill of it rather than from necessity. In her prime, with her illegal takings protected by a personal entourage of gunmen, Kate Leigh was a seriously wealthy woman.

According to our incognito detective, Kate Leigh never smoked or drank and she was never a prostitute. Just a 'bad, insane strong woman', who did not hesitate to pull a pistol on a working girl who owed her money. Best approached with caution.³

Tilly Devine, on the other hand, was synonymous with prostitution. For the young Tilly Twiss it was a way of surviving life in the harsh slums of London. After migrating to Sydney with her new soldier husband, Jim Devine, she stayed on the game at first, but moved rapidly to secure the position as Sydney's premiere madame. By the late 1920s Tilly was running eighteen bordellos in East Sydney, The Cross and Woolloomooloo, taking prostitution to a level of organization in Sydney not seen before. And Jim was busy getting the girls hooked on cocaine, the fashionable drug of the moment.

The Devines lived in a world of constant criminality, shootouts and wild parties. A brassy platinum blonde, dripping with makeup, jewels and furs, Tilly was constantly being charged and imprisoned, with an increasing number of assault offences, including two years for slashing a man with a razor in 1925.

Larry Writer, who has made a detailed study of these events, has observed that 'especially from 1926 onwards, Sydneysiders had ringside seats for a series of unprecedentedly violent incidents as vice lords and their gunmen, razor slashers, cocaine and sly grog sellers, illegal gamblers, pimps, blackmailers, thieves and strong –armed gorillas went to war with each other for a share of the rich proceeds of organised vice.'⁴



Now walk along Bayswater Road to the corner of Darlinghurst Road.

Minton House
For many years a huge clock
and neon sign above this building
announced to the world that it was

“Time for a Capstan”

Minton House

Three storey Minton House has stood on this corner since the mid 1920s, notwithstanding some stillborn plans back in the 1960s to replace it with a 21-storey building with three basement levels of parking.⁹ If that had happened, you probably wouldn't be standing here today. There are currently more plans for this site, so by the time you read this, who knows? That is the way of cities.

The upper floors were originally designed as residences but were then converted to low cost professional work spaces, providing low rent office space to film makers, writers and artists. East Timor's high profile politician, Jose Ramos Horta, occupied a room here for several years.

Below: Kings Cross intersection c. 1950.
City of Sydney Archives

*Far Right: Frederick Garling's watercolour
looks across Woolloomooloo Hill to
what is now Darlinghurst Road, c. 1840.*
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.



DARLINGHURST ROAD

... Ralph Darling, Governor of NSW 1824-1831.

Darlinghurst Road

At one stage there were five windmills along this ridge.

So what's in a name? Quite a lot. The name Woolloomooloo was once used to indicate a much larger area than it does today, with the elevated eastern slopes that today include Kings Cross being known as the Woolloomooloo Heights.

As for Ralph Darling, he's gone down in history as one of the least loved New South Wales governors, but he made sure he would be remembered by attaching his own name to a prodigious array of places; points, a river and several Sydney suburbs. Once the name Darlinghurst became attached to parts of eastern Sydney, then the road that went to and through this area became known as Darlinghurst Road.

Darlinghurst Road runs along a high ridge, with land sloping west and north-west down to Woolloomooloo Bay and Elizabeth Bay, and in the east to Rushcutters Bay. Hence the windmills, with sails endlessly revolving turning grain into flour. At least one remained on the horizon as late as the 1860s.⁶ Wouldn't it have been good to have retained just one windmill in a city where the elevated horizons were once dotted with their sails?



Early names (Darlinghurst Road)

Woolloomooloo Road,
Wind Mill Hill Road,
Mill Hill Road,
Mill Road,
'The Hill'.

“When I first arrived in Sydney a friend advised me of the acceptable streets to live in. ‘No, not Kellett Street’, she would say as I read aloud the advertisements from the ‘Herald’,

“No, certainly not Kings Cross Road!”⁷

Local view

Kings Cross Road and its neighbour, Bayswater Road, were once red light streets. The memory of being warned off renting in Kings Cross Road belongs to Dorothy Drain who arrived from Brisbane to live in The Cross in 1936. She eventually became editor of the very respectable *Australian Women's Weekly* during years when this was far and away the most widely read magazine in the country, by men as well as by women. She recalled life at the The Cross being fairly quiet, at least in her circle of girlfriends who worked in offices in the city, and relaxed in the evenings in their own company, at a café, or in one of their flats, chatting around the gas fire.

Drain's take on The Cross is a reminder that its inhabitants were all kinds, many of them quite ordinary, many of them creative and talented, and many of them as far removed from crime and corruption as anyone else.

Kings Cross has been home to many people

**WEALTHY, RESPECTABLE,
IMPOVERISHED, BOHEMIAN AND
JUST PLAIN CRIMINAL.**

Residents know well the nuances of its streets.

Burt's Milk Bar

Burt's

Most sources claim that the first milk bar to open in Sydney was the Black and White in Martin Place in the city in 1932. But there are other claims for Burt's in the 1920s. Perhaps it all depends on the definition. Early milk bars were just that – bars where the product was a non-alcoholic milkshake. Later versions added some seating, served snack food and provided a juke box to belt out the latest music. They became a place for young people to gather, and like Burt's at The Cross, were often located close to picture theatres.



Peter Finch
1954

“Kings Cross was a wonderful place.

Nothing since then, London, Paris, Hollywood or New York has been quite so wonderful. And although I lived on the edge of destitution,

I had never been happier in my life.”⁸

Local view

Around the time Peter Finch made this comment he landed his first lead in a Hollywood movie. He went on to be a screen sex symbol, while off-screen affairs with the likes of Vivien Leigh kept him in the public gaze. But earlier, from the late 1930s, Finch was often seen around The Cross. He did radio work for the ABC which was located in Darlinghurst Road, and acted in local productions, along with contemporaries such as Chips Rafferty, one time resident of the street, who died in Elizabeth Bay in 1971. The nearby Rushcutters Bay Film Studios ensured that the faces of the silver screen were familiar along the strip.

Local view

One person who lived her life and grew old here was the poet, writer and journalist Mary Gilmore, at No. 99, across the road. Look up and across to the windows opposite. Imagine the same face, ever aging, looking out on the street for thirty years, summing it all up, writing it all. You will meet her on the other side.

Hal Porter

“How **RUTHLESS** and **HARD** and **VILE** and **RIGHT** the young are.”⁹

Mary
Gilmore

“Youth troubles over eternity; age grasps at a day and is satisfied to have even that day.”¹⁰

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Auction sale poster for Alberto Terrace, 1923. City of Sydney Archives

Alberto Meat Emporium

Alberto's

A whole row of houses known as Alberto Terrace stood between here and Bayswater Road until replaced with shopfronts in the 1920s. A butcher's shop with the same name, a branch of Henry Woolfe Pty Ltd, traded here for many decades, giving the lie to the oft remembered diet of spaghetti and salami as the staple of Kings Cross residents. While such bohemian delights were fondly recorded, others just quietly went on eating chops and the occasional roast.

Lydia Gill

"Sydney didn't know about coffee... then

Repins Cafés

introduced their black coffee with the tiny jar of cream ... which was wonderful." 11

Repins

Repins Cafés were once located throughout the city. This is memory from the 1930s. Darlinghurst Road is remembered for having the last Repins, or at least a café with this name, operating in the 1980s.

Many Sydney 'identities' who chose artistic and creative lives above money

“...a shilling-in-the slot gas ring, and a hot bath down the corridor if you had the money to pay extra.”

Fine four storey terrace houses turn into boarding houses at the start of the 20th C. There were thirteen of them between Bayswater Road and Roslyn Street in 1921.

Renting in The Cross

From the 1870s an earlier generation of grand houses and large gardens on Darlinghurst Road had been subdivided and replaced with large terrace houses, some of them three or even four storeys. These 'gentlemen's residences' later slipped down the social scale to become boarding houses. One room, with shared bathrooms and a common sitting room if you were lucky. A landlord, or more often, a landlady, might provide meals, or tenants might cook for themselves in shared kitchens or on a gas ring in their own room. The typical landlady as portrayed in the literature was a dragon who meddled in the affairs of the residents in the interests of preventing smoking, drinking or any other 'entertainment' in the rooms. Eventually many of these places were internally modified and subdivided into warrens of small flats, and many still survive today as low cost rental accommodation.

By the early 20th century most Sydneysiders had begun a love affair with suburban houses and leafy gardens. The inner ring of older housing became affordable for renters. In most places this meant retention of an older working class character. But Kings Cross was different. The attraction for un-suburban 'types', including those well outside of anything respectable, kept real estate prices cheaper than might otherwise have been the case, given the quality of the building stock and its location on the edge of the wealthy eastern part of Sydney. The rest of Sydney looked on but did not buy.

Lennie Lower

"I have been slung out of so many flats that all our furniture is now equipped with wheels."

Kenneth Slessor

"You find this ugly,
I find it lovely"

Poetry

Kenneth Slessor, who was born in 1901 and died in 1971, made a living as a journalist and official war correspondent. But he is best known for his poetry that took inspiration from this part of the world. Slessor's own life was in many ways far from those described in his writings. He has been described thus: 'lucifer smooth and quite proper when it suited him, yet with a raffish edge that allowed him a bohemian insight on the world, Slessor was the quintessential Sydney bard'.¹²

The line 'You find this ugly, I find it lovely' comes from his poem *William Street* written in 1935. For a time Slessor lived in a flat above the shops at the top of the street, famously captured in many photographs. This is the part of Darlinghurst Road just south of Bayswater Road where this walk begins. If you are a stranger to these parts, it is the bit of the road that stares down the long sweep of William Street to the city below.

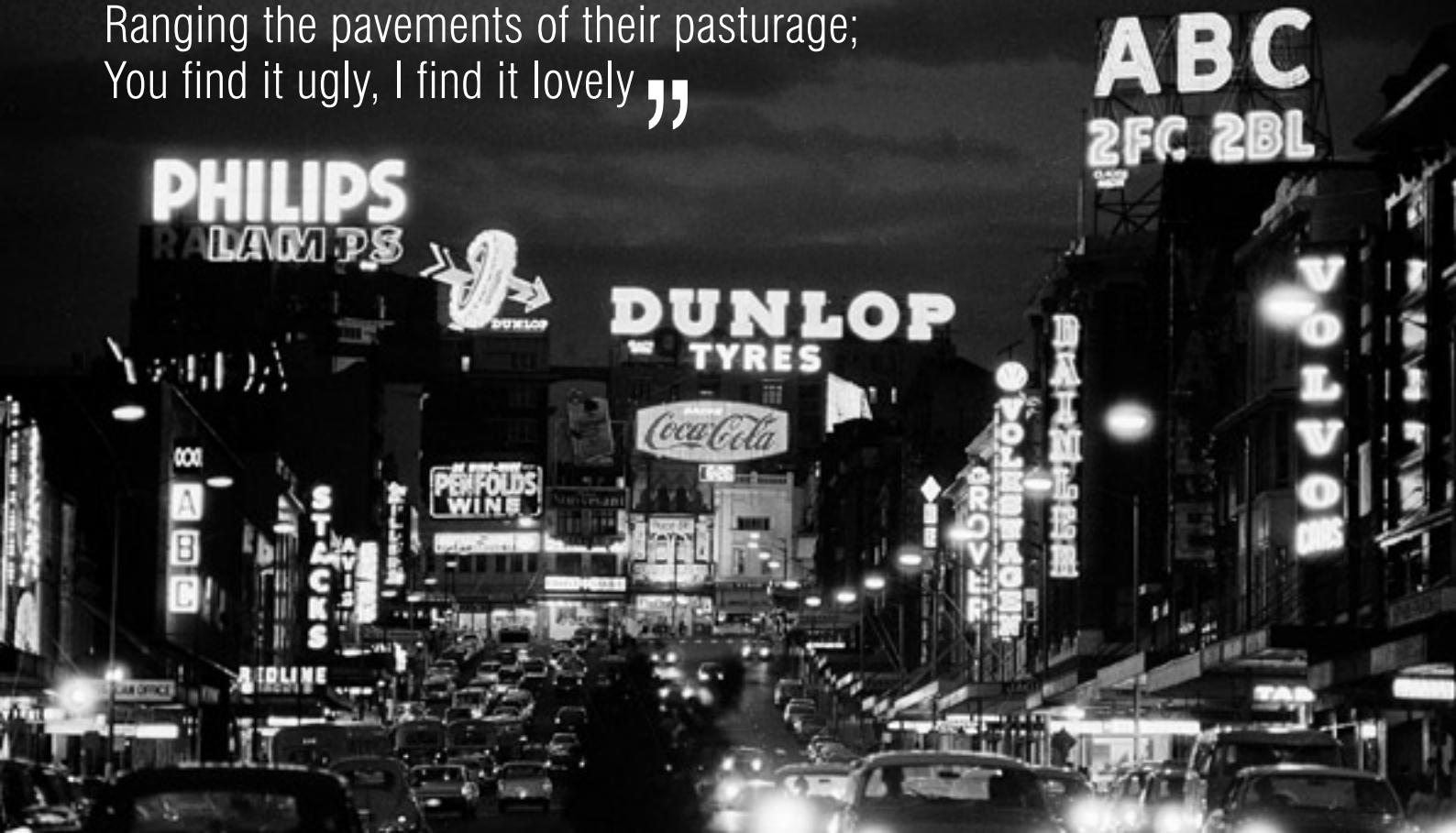
William Street, 1970. At street level, a row of shops, and above the most raffish advertising in the city. The large pulsating arrow continuously pierced through the larger than life Goodyear car tyre – an unmistakable sexual image to complement the activities of the street. Later this section of Darlo Road housed the famous Pink Pussycat strip joint, and when it was replaced by high-rise, the huge Coca Cola sign that locates the spot today.

National Archives of Australia A1200, L84004

making

have lived on this strip of Darlinghurst Road.

“ The red globe of light, the liquor green,
The pulsing arrows and the running fire
Spilt on the stones, go deeper than a stream;
You find this ugly, I find it lovely
The dips and molls, with flip and shiny gaze
(death at their elbows, hunger at their heels)
Ranging the pavements of their pasturage;
You find it ugly, I find it lovely ”



The Woolworths Building 1939

The Balcony Restaurant

A canteen for World War 2 soldiers

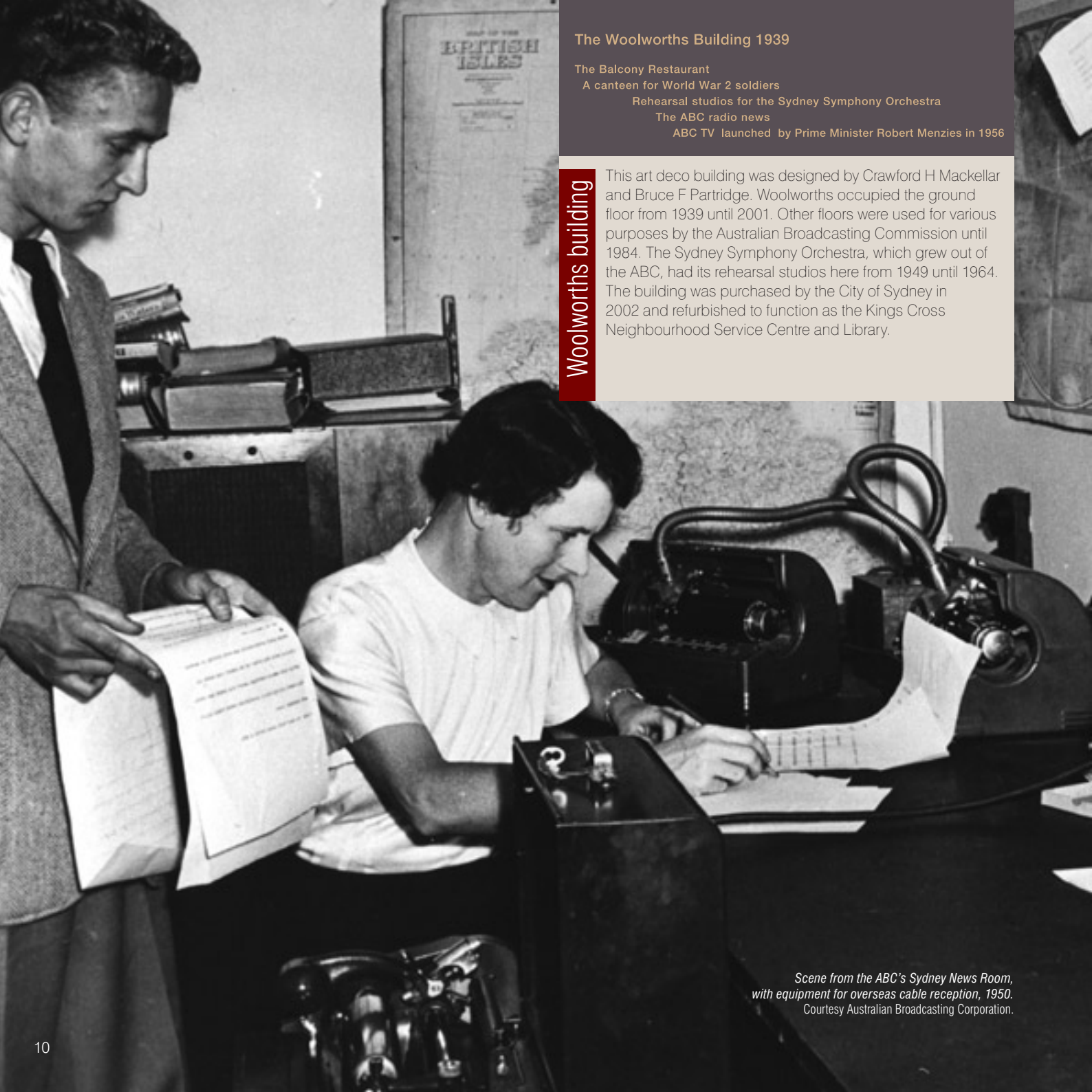
Rehearsal studios for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra

The ABC radio news

ABC TV launched by Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1956

Woolworths building

This art deco building was designed by Crawford H Mackellar and Bruce F Partridge. Woolworths occupied the ground floor from 1939 until 2001. Other floors were used for various purposes by the Australian Broadcasting Commission until 1984. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which grew out of the ABC, had its rehearsal studios here from 1949 until 1964. The building was purchased by the City of Sydney in 2002 and refurbished to function as the Kings Cross Neighbourhood Service Centre and Library.



*Scene from the ABC's Sydney News Room,
with equipment for overseas cable reception, 1950.
Courtesy Australian Broadcasting Corporation.*

Potts Point Fish and Oyster Supply. From the 1870s the Woolloomooloo fishing fleet supplied the local fish shops.

Fishy business

Some of the earliest non-Anglo settlers in the area were the Italian and Maltese fisherfolk who lived close by to the fish markets that were located in Woolloomooloo until 1911. Long after the markets were removed, the fleet remained, and old-timers can still recall the fishing nets spread out for drying and mending along the back streets of The Cross. The 'oyster saloon', often run by people of Mediterranean origin, was a common place to drop in for a late night snack in late 19th and early 20th century Sydney.

Norman Lindsay

"What's the good of trying to earn a living? Go in for Art."

Lindsay

Norman Lindsay never lived in The Cross, though he almost certainly had coffee there. But he deserves a spot on the pavement if only because his paintings of naked women, satyrs and imagined worlds, considered to be daring at the time, resonated with Sydney's bohemian community that considered King Cross its heartland in the early part of the 20th century.



The next inscriptions you will encounter along the Strip commemorate the time-honoured pastime of taking time out for coffee and cake. If you feel the need, Vittorio Bianchi's Piccolo Bar in Roslyn Street just up ahead will fill the bill. It is one of the institutions of The Cross, just a bit too far off the Strip to get a mention in bronze.

The Arabian tea and coffee shop. A place to find the demi-monde, the down and out artists and their models. Upholstered booths provided private space for divvying up stolen property, while others remember it as an 'olde world' café, setting for 'endless conversations and encounters'. Ure Smith and Marjorie Barnard Risque wall decorations by Rosaleen Norton.

Coffee anyone?



Artist: Tony Zoates. Mitchell Library, Slate Library of New South Wales.

Until far into the 20th century, Sydneysiders were far more likely to 'have a cuppa' [tea] than they were to drink coffee. Coffee lounges were places to go if you were wanting to be 'fashionable', and the best coffee was long thought to be available in Kings Cross, not least because here you might overhear a piece of underworld gossip or rub shoulders with an actual 'bohemian.' Many people from outside the area who were wary of the more dodgy aspects of Cross life, were nevertheless attracted to a cup of coffee for these possible side benefits.

Willow Café

Kama Café

Buttercup
Cakes

Stylish Moka Coffee Lounge

ROOMS TO LET Cartoonist Emile Mercier once lived in the attic and William Dobell had digs here.



*Above: You've got to laugh:
Emile Mercier, hamming it up with local
chef, Walter Magnus, early 1940s.*
Private collection, Peter Magnus.

Left: Bill Dobell at work.
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

His 'Joshua Smith' won the Archibald (Prize for Portraiture) in 1943 and resulted in a court case;

was it a portrait or a caricature? Tempers ran hot.



And if you go a little way down Roslyn Street at this location there is a comment from Dobell's biographer, and fellow artist, James Gleeson.

HE COULD CREATE BEAUTY
FROM THE UGLY, THE SORDID
OR THE RIDICULOUS • DOBELL
COULD LOOK AT THE SEAMIEST
SCENES AND TRANSMUTE THEIR
DROSS INTO THE PRECIOUS
METAL OF ART • JAMES GLEESON

William Dobell

William Dobell (1899- 1970) is one of Australia's best-loved artists. He only lived on the corner of Roslyn Street for a few years from 1939, but this was an important period in Dobell's artistic life, and many later works reflect elements of this place. His brush captured Cross personalities including Dame Mary Gilmore (1957), Gilmore's neighbour the genial restaurateur Walter Magnus (Chez Walter 1945) and Elaine Hoxton (1941), a fellow artist whose painting decorated the walls of Magnus's restaurant. These people are all recorded on the pavement on the other side of the road. And while The Cross is not usually remembered as a place of industrial labour, Dobell's image of a cement worker at the Captain Cook Graving Dock (1944) reminds us otherwise. The Dock was being built at Garden Island, down the end of Macleay Street, towards the end of the Second World War.

In December 1943 Dobell's portrait of Joshua Smith was awarded the Archibald Art Prize for portraiture by the Trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW. Several members of the conservative Royal Art Society challenged this decision on the grounds that the painting was not a portrait, but a caricature. The case was heard in the Supreme Court of NSW in October 1944.

It generated a lot of public interest. Suddenly everyone in Sydney had an opinion on Bill Dobell. People who had no interest in art and who had never been to an art exhibition in their life became embroiled in pub discussions about 'that' picture. For the art world, it was more than a case about Bill. It was a struggle for modernism over conservatism in art.

The judgment went in favour of the Trustees and Dobell, who retained the prize. It is probably this experience that helped to fix the 'Archibald' in the popular consciousness, and although it is not the most valuable art prize, it is the one that attracts the greatest following. Each year the Art Gallery of NSW is inundated with hopeful exhibitors, all desperate to be hung, because to be hung in the Archibald is to be exposed to a huge audience of viewers, many of whom only ever attend the Art Gallery for this particular event.

Thelma Clune, who thought 'it was unbelievable what people did to Bill', was patron and mother-figure to many of Sydney's up and coming artists in the 1940s and 50s. She ran the Clune Galleries in nearby Macleay Street in a period when very few ordinary Aussies bothered with art. Her recollections of the way Dobell was treated resonates with his biographer's claims that in the period following this incident, Dobell's nerves were shattered, and he suffered health problems which resulted in permanent damage to one eye. When he eventually began painting again, he chose to paint landscapes at first, though significantly his first post-Joshua Smith portrait was of Thelma Clune.¹³

The Clune Galleries later became the Yellow House, which supported a new generation of painters including Martin Sharp and George Gittoes. Today it is a classy café, with gallery attached.

Thelma Clune

"They followed him in the street, spat at him, his phone ran constantly with people abusing him ... it was unbelievable now what people did to Bill."¹⁴

BATTLESHIP CORNER

A favourite soliciting spot for prostitutes, 'especially when the American invasion occurred in the early forties'.¹⁵

American invasion

Close links between whoring and soldiering are recorded as far back as the historical recording of battles goes. This quotation recalls the World War 2 period, when Sydney Harbour became a central place for refitting and repairing allied ships engaged in the Pacific, and troops on leave were stationed in Sydney, primarily at The Cross. The battle ships came into Woolloomooloo Bay. Maramanah, an eccentric old mansion that stood on the site of the present El Alamein Fountain, was commandeered for barracks. The stylish Balcony Restaurant of the Woolworths Building at 50 Darlinghurst Road was used as a canteen, and the street was full of the swagger of young servicemen.



Cross over Roslyn Street.

Juanita Nielsen

Fought to protect some of the area's historic housing in the 1970s. Through her local newspaper 'NOW' she supported trade union green bans.

Juanita Nielsen
Reproduced from Elizabeth Butel & Tom Thompson, *Kings Cross Album* (1984).



Foul play

Juanita Nielsen has become a larger-than-life character in the annals of The Cross. She used her voice as editor of a local newspaper to oppose high-rise development in nearby Victoria Street. Back in the early 1970s when these beautiful houses were run down, developers were anxious to demolish much of the western side of the street to make way for high residential towers. One plan had them at 45 storeys.

The Builders Labourers' Federation, in alliance with the residents, placed a 'green ban' on the project. Eviction notices were served, windows were smashed and utilities ripped out of the houses. In what was the most brutal of all the development battles in these 'green ban' years, 'the developer employed armed thugs to vandalise the buildings and terrorise the residents, where one resident disappeared and returned too frightened to say what had happened to him and where one activist disappeared forever'.¹⁶ Nielsen.

Who did it? Many suspected James McCartney Anderson, who managed the Carousel Club for owner Abe Saffron.

On July 4th 1975, Juanita attended a business meeting at the Carousel Club on this corner ...

and was never seen again.

Believed murdered.

Anderson accused Detective Sergeant Fred Krahe, once Krahe was safely dead. Everyone has a theory of who did the deed and what happened to the body. But while many are sure they know, no one has ever been brought to justice for the crime, and the drama surrounding Juanita Nielsen's murder still fascinates, thirty years after the event. In the words of the latest writer on the subject, 'Juanita's legacy transcends and inspires the struggle for the soul of Sydney'¹⁷

Carlotta

One of the first people to have a sex change operation in Australia. Performed at Les Girls until 1992.

Les Girls

Sex appeal

In 1964 this corner building became home to the long-running drag queen venue, Les Girls. Carlotta, who started life as a boy from Balmain, was selected to perform in its first show, and as its best-known performer, she reigned supreme as the Queen of Kings Cross for the next quarter of a century. Dripping sequins and sex, the show began as risqué, but eventually became a 'must see' for just about everyone. Carlotta underwent one of the first sex change operations performed in Australia at the Prince of Wales Hospital in the early seventies, for which she paid only the cost of the legal papers that waived any comeback she might have had if the operation had gone wrong. It didn't. Carlotta was the inspiration for the film 'Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.'

Les Girls, 1969.

Private collection: Janice Cave

“The world’s greatest all male revue...”

George Sprod

“GAWD STRIKE ME DEAD...is that supposed to be a man or a woman?”

Round here it's difficult to tell the difference. If it's too feminine to be a woman it's got to be a bloke.”

ABE SAFFRON

Publican and nightclub owner from 1946, convictions and court appearances from 1938. Friends in high places.



'Judge' Peter Piercy on keyboard.

Marie Francis at El Rocco. Les Welch.
Edwin Duff.

Barbara James and her microphone.

Jazz at The Cross

Jazz at The Cross

In the 1930s when jazz was cutting edge music, Barbara James was at the top of her profession, playing the Trocadero, Sydney's leading dance venue in the city, and at the swank Roosevelt Nightclub in Orwell Street, Kings Cross. Her use of the new technology of the microphone, then unacceptable in traditional music circles, led her to develop that intimate style of erotic singing through the freedom of being able to concentrate on 'quality' without having to worry about 'quantity' of voice. Jazz, being somewhat risqué, suited The Cross, where the later arrival of American servicemen in the 1940s consolidated its popularity.

Peter Piercy's Sydney career dates from the 1950s. He played many concerts at the Stadium at Rushcutters Bay, as well as in all the usual jazz and rhythm and blues venues. They say he has met all the greats, and that when Frank Sinatra was in town, Piercy was his accompanist of choice.

A complete list of musicians associated with Kings Cross would be long indeed. People who have been around a while will recall other names – locals like Bob Birtles or Errol Buddle, as well as the big name overseas entertainers who played down the hill at the Stadium in the 1950s and 60s, and in the nightclubs around here after the show. At the other end of the spectrum there was Owen Lloyd, known simply as the Birdman. Until the 1980s he played a home-made fiddle in Fitzroy Gardens, always with about a dozen birds dancing on the bow.

Harry Stein
Kings Cross communist, intellectual, journalist
and publicist. Founded Australia's first jazz
convention in Melbourne with Graham Bell in 1946.

Harry was a Melbourne boy who ran away to Sydney to see the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge when he was about thirteen years old. From 1950 he lived permanently in The Cross, and devoted his life to left wing journalism, writing and music. He commenced a chapter on The Cross in his autobiography with the old Jewish saying 'if you live long enough, you will see everything.'¹⁸



Smiling for the camera at the Roosevelt Nightclub, 1944
Sam Hood Collection, State Library of New South Wales.



Thomas Barker, an early colonial miller, was granted 9 acres of land here in 1833.



Thomas Barker

Imagine it. Imagine being given nine acres (3.6 hectares) of land here, for free. Barker was not even one of the top men in the little town of Sydney, but merely a flour miller. In addition to being a successful businessman, with mills at Darling Harbour as well as here, Barker promoted railway development, supported education and the arts, sat in Parliament for a time, was a patron of various educational institutions and supported every good cause. But according to local legend all this did not stop him hosting some of the town's most talked about parties here at Roslyn Hall.

Above: George Peacock's 1845 painting of the view across Barker's mills to Woolloomooloo. Dixon Library, Slate Library of New South Wales.

The two windmills

he built near the corner of Roslyn Street became early landmarks in the area.

His grand residence 'Roslyn Villa', which faced down Macleay Street is reputed to have had a staircase wide enough to fit a coach and pair, and sunken bathtubs in most of the bedrooms.

Rosaleen Norton

1917-1979

... born in a thunderstorm, with pointed ears ...

... genius or crank?

Rosaleen Norton's interest in the occult and the supernatural earned her the name of 'The Witch of Kings Cross'. She was hounded by a conservative press that labelled her decadent, corrupt and evil. Tales of pagan rites and sex magic being performed at Kings Cross titillated suburban Sydney in the 1940s and 50s. Her paintings of covens, devils and pagan gods resulted in obscenity charges.

Witch!

'Roie' Norton was an outsider in a straight-laced society. She became a minor *cause celebre* when her relationship with Sir Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, became known. He was caught bringing pornographic material into the country in 1956, while police possession of incriminating letters to Rosaleen did not help matters. His career was ruined.¹⁹

Today, when everyone does it, Norton's green nail polish would go unremarked and her so-called pagan and satanic sexual behaviour might raise few eyebrows. When her book of paintings of witches' covens and so on was reissued in facsimile in 1982, it did not generate much interest.

KINGS CROSS WHISPER

Terry Blake
Max Cullen

"I think it was our sheer cheek that took them by surprise.

How dare we? It was

El Alamein Fountain

For several decades after it was built in 1961, the El Alamein Fountain was 'the' place to celebrate the arrival of the New Year. These entries on the pavement refer to the almost accidental arrival on the scene of a new local newspaper that became notorious in its time.



El Alamein Fountain, designed by Robert Woodward, built 1961.
Photographer Paul Green, City of Sydney.



You have arrived at the top of Darlinghurst Road. Cross the road here to begin walking back on the other side. But when you have crossed, first walk a little way into Macleay Street and you will notice an inscription in large white lettering.

1930s • FASCISM &
RUMOURS OF WAR •
REFUGEES FLEE •
CHOOSE KINGS CROSS
AS HOME • EUROPEAN
DECO FASHION &
FOOD • CROSS GOES
COSMOPOLITAN

Immigrants

European immigrants who began arriving before World War 2 often found the flats and the street life of The Cross more congenial and more 'European' than other lifestyle options in Sydney. Many made it their permanent home.

Sketch of The Cross, reproduced from Catherine Gluck, Frederick B Lamberger: The Man and His Art, 1990, p. 59. Catherine and her brother Frederick, refugees from Hungary, arrived in Sydney in 1950, and made Kings Cross their home.



Two tipsy journalists published a spoof newspaper to shock the respectable and to sell to new year's eve revellers, 1964. It sold, and kept on selling for over a decade.

wild and wonderful. For a brief and glorious moment we actually made a quid making people laugh.”²⁰

Female and single: From the start of the twentieth century, many residents of Kings Cross and Potts Point lived in flats, or tiny 'bed-sits' in a city where practically everyone else lived in houses. And many of them were women. The decimation of the young male population in World War I left a legacy of young women who would never marry and who needed to live close to the city in order to work. This was the impetus for much of the apartment building in this precinct.

Steve's

The best Italian deli in the world

Delis

Kenneth Slessor paid homage to places like Steve's when he penned the following words in the 1960s:

“Delicatessen! If one word could evoke the essence of King Cross to Australians abroad as hauntingly as gum leaves bring them an image of the bush, it might be those five German syllables ... For the gourmet with money and imagination they are magic toyshops, piled with bottled, canned, and silver-wrapped loot from all the countries of the world. For most of the countless thousands who pass them daily on their way home from work, they are the equivalent of a larder, a cellar and a kitchen garden.”

He went on to salivate over 'the hanging gardens of exotic sausages and the cheeses as round and red as croquet balls' and asked 'who could be content with the old style supper of pie-and-peas or fish and chips when shop windows for a hundred yards around are bursting with metwurst and liverwurst and all the other wursts, Italian salami, Polish salami ...' the list runs on.²¹

The Astoria

Cheap eatery. Roast and three veg.

Traditional foods

Some were content with more traditional fare, however. From the late 1940s, the Astoria, at No 7 was an institution valued for its plain cooking and homely atmosphere. The old Havilah Flats above, currently contain a private hotel which uses the name Astoria.



Christopher Brennan, 1870-1932: POET, ACADEMIC AND DRUNK could usually be found “quoting bawdy passages from the classics. You could approach the Presence ...

...as long as you brought him a schooner of beer”.

Ray
Lindsay

C Brennan

Brennan was cultured, learned and complex. Also alcoholic. After the sins of inebriation and adultery resulted in his removal from a senior teaching position at Sydney University, he did some part-time teaching at St Vincent's College in Potts Point, where the sisters treated him with a lenient kindness. He could often be seen tracking along Darlinghurst Road on his way to the Mansions Hotel in Bayswater Road, his favourite watering hole. Brennan's poetry continues to be highly regarded.

David Scott Mitchell (1836-1907) devoted his time and fortune to collecting books, papers and pictures relating to Australia. He gave the collection to the people of NSW. The Mitchell Library is a mecca for Australian scholars.

D S Mitchell

D S Mitchell lived here from 1871. The leading booksellers of the town would routinely visit, and if they had anything worthwhile to sell him, Mitchell would always buy. He stinted on most things, but never on books. In the end the house was overflowing with them. The Trustees of the New South Wales Library were assiduous in cultivating his company, and when he died Mitchell bequeathed his whole collection and a sizable bequest of money to the Trustees. There was a condition that the collection be housed in a purpose-built library. Fortunately the Premier of the day, J H Carruthers, had enough vision to push this through parliament and the Mitchell Library was commenced in 1907. Incidentally, Christopher Brennan worked for a time at the library cataloguing Mitchell's books.

Initially it had seemed a good idea to find a quote from Mitchell himself about the importance of reading, but the great bibliophile was not given to writing, and research failed to turn up anything suitable. Better, perhaps, to say something 'global' about books, given the enormous and immeasurable value of this particular contribution of Darlinghurst Road to the world.

Descartes

“The reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest men of past centuries.”

This is one of the most frequently quoted observations on the value of books. But it is perhaps a bit pompous for Darlinghurst Road. It is not universally agreed that fine writing is always the product of fine men and at The Cross it could only be expected that writers and thinkers would come in all sorts of guises. Read on.

"I am a true thinker and speaker.
I cannot stand or endure the

Bea Miles had a way with words. She was born into a 'good' family in 1902, and died in the arms of the church in 1973. In between, she dropped out of Sydney University, lived for a time in a stormwater drain pipe at nearby Rushcutters Bay, interrupted the quiet days of library users and proclaimed her atheism to all and sundry, along with giving poetry recitals and discoursing on philosophy. She is most remembered in her mature years, a large woman dressed in an army greatcoat, sandshoes and a tennis visor, leaping into taxi cabs at stop lights and demanding to be taken on long journeys. Her early tertiary education contributed to the intellectual life of Sydney's pavements, and onlookers who gave her sixpence in return for a spiel from Shakespeare were rarely disappointed.

priggery,
caddery,
snobbery,
smuggery,
hypocrisy,
lies,
flattery,
compliments,
praise,
jealousy,
envy,
pretence,

conventional speech and behaviour
and affected artificial behaviour
upon which society is based." ²²

Kookaburra cakes 'made on the premises'

Springfield Inn, one of the earliest purpose-built hotels in
The Cross, with the Kookaburra Café on
the corner. Shiny black Art Deco surfaces.



Cross over Springfield Avenue.

These large and pompous estates of the rich

were the very antithesis of the dense residential land uses that are a feature of present day Kings Cross/Potts Point. 'Springfield' was demolished in 1934.

In 1828 Governor Darling subdivided the Woolloomooloo Hill into large allotments which he granted to a select group of colonists;

his senior civil servants, legal men and a few commercial 'gentlemen'.

'Springfield', built in 1830, was one of the earliest of the grand houses which became a feature of this area.

Mansions

When Governor Darling decided to grant large pieces of Woolloomooloo Hill to his mates, he argued that this high status area 'would serve as both example and chastisement to the debased populace of Sydney Town'. The land came with conditions. There was to be only one house per grant, and each was to establish landscaped gardens.²³ Seventeen mansions were built. Most have long since been demolished, remembered only through street names such as Roslyn, Orwell and Kellett. A few still stand, used for other purposes, including Tusculum in Manning Street. Rockwall is in private ownership, while one of the grandest, Elizabeth Bay House, is a museum. None retain their original generous gardens.

*Auction sale poster for
Springfield House & grounds, 1923.
City of Sydney Archives.*



SOAPBOX TERRITORY!

Preachers and spruikers. Politicians promising everything. Jessie Street collecting money for sheepskins for Russia during World War 2.

Ada Green preaching every Friday night until the police booked her for obstruction.

Public oratory

The days of the soapbox orator belong to a former time, when life was lived at a more leisurely pace, and lighter pockets made home-grown free entertainment more attractive. A time before television, that sent people indoors, and before extended retail and working hours, that kept them otherwise occupied.

Local politicians would mount the hustings to tout for your vote, or, in the case of Jessie Street, plead for your pennies to support her causes. Street was a high profile feminist and a voice for international peace from the 1930s.²⁴ When Germany invaded the Soviet Union she mobilized to raise money for that front, including the 'sheepskins for Russia' appeal. A member of a wealthy Sydney family, Jessie Street was equally at home advising an Australian delegation to the United Nations or working the street corner to get her messages out. Jessie Street was also involved in a housing project for working women in Kings Cross.

With the shops and just about everything else shut on Sundays, huge crowds would gather at the Domain in the city to heckle the afternoon speakers. You could take your pick of subject matter, as revolutionaries spouted Karl Marx, bible fanatics quoted chapter and verse, international relations 'experts' predicted the end of the world and all sorts of speakers exposed the latest political scandal or extolled the latest health cure.

Come rain, hail or shine, self proclaimed evangelist Ada Green divided her time between the Domain and the corner of Springfield Avenue on Darlinghurst Road, where she was sure to draw a crowd on a Friday evening. Always neatly dressed, with hat and timbrel, Green was just one of several whacky individuals who gave freely their wisdom to whoever would listen.

"To the mingled
cheers and boos
of the mob,

she'd mount the steps of the paddy-wagon
like an aristocrat going to the guillotine,
still preaching defiantly away until the steel
door clanged shut..." George Sprod



And eleven hundred strangers,
And the darkness full of fear,
live on aspirin and beer..."

[The term 'black maria' is widely used in Australia to refer to a police van or prison van. It probably originated in the United States where it was first used in the early 19th century, but its origins are obscure.]

Sweethearts

When the nightclubs had finally closed down in the early hours of the morning, if you were still standing you could still go on to Sweethearts for breakfast.

“you’re the cream in my coffee,
you’re the salt in my stew”



Private collection, Janice Cave

Dorothy
Drain

“Once I took an out-of-town girlfriend to the California.
She was disappointed because I couldn’t point out a gunman.” ²⁵

The California Restaurant KC Sandwich Bar

Established here in the 1930s by
Dick McGowan, ex-US naval officer,

High bar stools ... club sandwiches ... percolated coffee with cream ... the ‘second cup free’... décor ‘modern’... clientele rowdy ...

SAVOY HOTEL BURNT DOWN, CHRISTMAS 1975. 15 killed. Arsonist sentenced to 4 life-terms.

Detail of Kings Cross by Frederick Lamberger. Catherine Gluck donation, City of Sydney Library.

1978 SYDNEY'S FIRST MARDI GRAS

ENDS IN MASS ARRESTS

Mardi Gras

The first Mardi Gras parade along Oxford Street on Saturday 24th June 1978 was subjected to police harassment. Following a fracas at Hyde Park, the crowd, by now a bit angry and confused, headed for Kings Cross, where the police began to round them up and made about 50 arrests. Over the following weeks there were further protests leading to more arrests, but in the end many of the charges were dropped and by the next year the laws in relation to the holding of public demonstrations had been relaxed.

The parade, now part of a longer festival, is one of the largest of its kind in the world. And while it is an excuse to parade exotic and edgy costumes and behaviours, it is also a serious event with hard hitting commentary on the political issues of the day. While some die-hard opponents may still pray for rain, many respectable organizations now participate, including gay members of the police force.

IN DARLINGHURST RD.

"We were like sheep herded into a pen. The police picked up people randomly and threw them headfirst into paddy wagons." ²⁶

"There was a feeling that we were in the middle of something historic, that our lives would all be changed." ²⁷

The Wintergarden

consulting rooms: doctors and dentists, dressmakers and hairdressers

BACK-IN-A-DAY dry cleaners

Dulcie Deamer (1890-1972). Actor, journalist and full time bohemian.

Claimed she had to stop performing the splits and belly-dancing at parties after a heart attack at age 73.

Oversexed,

overpaid,

and over here.



GIs

Probably no-one knows who first said it, but everyone did say it during World War 2, in relation to the GIs stationed in Britain and in Australia. There was a certain amount of jealousy and distrust on the part of local males of the better paid and brash Americans who could give the girls a good time, or at least manage a box of chocolates or a pair of stockings, both scarce during wartime austerity.

O Lady Lady
frock shop

Fashion

Right back in the 19th century the street was dotted with 'costumiers' and milliners and gentlemen's tailors. When dressmaker Mrs. Oates opened her O Lady Lady frock shop in the 1930s she was at the heart of the street's fashion hub. According to the commercial directories the strip between Springfield Avenue and Victoria Street contained three frock shops and at least six other dressmakers, as well as related activities such as dyers and dry cleaners. These kinds of shops survived well into the second half of the century.

Photo: Russell Roberts, Walkabout Collection,
State Library of New South Wales

“All I can say is she’s got a nerve getting around like that. Why she’s practically naked. I’ve a good mind to call the police.”

“She probably is
the police Auntie ...
in disguise to track
down drug peddlers” 28

Humour

There is nothing particularly famous about George Sprod, cartoonist and journalist who lived at The Cross on and off from 1939, but his observations appear several times on the pavement because he was so good at capturing the humour of the place. They are taken from his book, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross; Kings Cross Ancient and Modern* – the first phrase, the title of a Christian hymn, is suitably irreverent, while the text book tone of the sub-title is strikingly at odds with the contents of cartoons and raucous social comment contained between its covers.

Information

Ducking off the street for a few minutes to watch the newsreels was a way of keeping up with the news. *Movietone* and *Cinesound* bought the latest world events to the big screen, only a little later than the newspapers. If the morning headlines were sensational, the newsreel theatre would be full. Newsreels died with the arrival of television.

Newsreel Theatrette

Dame Mary Gilmore. radical thinker. writer of poetry and prose. journalist.

Social comment

We met Gilmore briefly on the other side of the road. Her life encompassed political work for various organizations, journalism, including writing for the communist paper *Tribune*, poetry and prose. She was actively involved in establishing organizations that recognized writers. Born in the 1860s, she had a relationship with Henry Lawson. She travelled to Paraguay in the 1890s to help establish the New Australia, an experimental colony which was intended to create a socialist society that embraced all the good things its supporters felt could have been established in Australia had things been different. But for much of her life Gilmore lived here at flat number 2 and she probably patronized the Blue Lending Library below. By the sixties she had become much revered, and when she crossed the road to make radio and television appearances, anything she said was bound to get good media coverage. Her portrait by Kings Cross neighbour, Bill Dobell, hangs in the Art Gallery of NSW and she also makes an appearance on the ten dollar note.

Gilmore lived at No.99 from
1933 until her death in 1962
at 97 years of age.

‘votes for women’. better deal for aboriginal people.

Blue Lending Library

Books

Buying books was out of the reach of many people in the early 20th century, and it was not until the 1950s that local free libraries began to appear in Sydney. Private lending libraries would lend books for a small fee, in much the same way stores later lent videos and DVDs. This one, run by Mrs. E Harris, was on this spot for many decades from the early 1930s.

The Claremont

Walls decorated by Elaine Hoxton

Walter Magnus, Jewish refugee and dentist. Unable to practice in Sydney, he opened a restaurant on the ground floor of The Claremont in 1938, thereby introducing goulash and schnitzel to the local cuisine.

The Claremont



Walter Magnus, with cigar. Walter Magnus's Claremont restaurant became an institution in the area in the 1940s, and so did Walter. His son Peter recalls his father as someone who could behave outrageously, but who would also help out a neighbour in need. Not all meals eaten at The Claremont were paid for. Private collection, Peter Magnus.

One person who knew and loved the Cross was Dr Jim Eakin.

He knew the way into dark and gloomy basements and he climbed rickety staircases on errands of mercy. His waiting room was always full; he kept no set hours, but always came when he was needed.²⁹

Dr James Eakin

Dr James Eakin's surgery and residence stood here until the 1950s. Robin Eakin's book *Aunts Up the Cross* memorably describes the daily life of her madcap Irish father and her Polish Jewish mother, a true daughter of The Cross whose family home had been 'Maramanah'. With its many turrets and balconies and endless rooms, Maramanah once sprawled across the space now occupied by the Fitzroy Gardens at the end of Darlinghurst Road.³⁰

Eakin's raucous, explosive household welcomed a raft of whacky relatives and hangers-on, waifs and strays who stayed for a night, or a week or a decade or two. The daughter recalls the endless preparation and consumption of food, smoke filled rooms – her mother was a hundred-a-day smoker – and a father constantly trying to hone his gambling skills through the development of a fail-safe 'system'. Tony McGill, 'our starting-price bookmaker' came around every Thursday night to square up on the previous Saturday's betting. SP bookmaking was illegal, but widely practiced.

The 'gun doc' label stuck not only because, on the advice of the police, he carried one when he went on night calls to the underworld, but because he was particularly inept in his use of it. On the day he first got the gun, he 'indulged in a little quiet target practice in the surgery' which apparently interfered with a glass case of instruments and left some permanent damage to the plaster-work. When World War 2 broke out, licenses to own firearms were reviewed, and so Eakin took himself up to the local police station to discuss the issue, where, over a cup of tea, he managed to just miss shooting the sergeant's leg.

He did however manage to shoot himself. He kept the gun in the drawer of his desk, and on one occasion when he was idly fingering it to while away the time as a patient droned on about the state of her nerves, he inadvertently pulled the trigger. The bullet pierced through base of the drawer and into the doctor's knee, thereby interfering with his status as a champion billiard player.

Or at least those are the tales told by his daughter. She left Kings Cross after the war to become, as Robin Dalton, a successful London film and literary agent. The house in Darlinghurst Road was sold in the fifties and its frontage to the street filled in with glass in order to turn it into shops and offices. These later became a sex arcade and the space is now the entrance to the underground railway station.³¹

Eakin was known as the 'gun doc' because he looked

Surf City & Billy Thorpe.

Everyone did the stomp to

big stars and hopeless one-hit wonders.

Surf City

The Kings Cross movie theatre was converted into a dance venue for 'surf' music, called Surf City, in the 1960s. In the decade before, Lee Gordon had been filling the Stadium at Rushcutters Bay with overseas rock-and-roll stars, but Surf City was where the locals went, and on a regular, sometimes nightly, basis. 'Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs' were its most famous performers, with Thorpe, who has written a couple of autobiographical books, claiming very large numbers for all their shows.³²

Liberty Bell Milk Bar
Hookers and World War 2 American servicemen

Liberty

Milk Bars could provide more than lollies and soft drinks for the local kids.

During World War 2, Americans serving in the Pacific were stationed in Sydney on R&R and their presence was nowhere more strongly felt than at Kings Cross. American names, such as the Liberty Bell, proliferated. Lonely men found The Cross a more accepting place than elsewhere, and Sydney women, hookers or not, found it a profitable place to earn a living, or score a good night out.

The American presence is a recurring theme on the pavement, just as it's a recurring part of the story of Kings Cross.

Going to the Flicks ... Kings Cross Picture Palace...

Saturday matinees in the thirties packed to the ceiling with kids ... 3d. in the stalls, 6d. in the lounge ... including a free comic.

... at intervals ... over to Burt's Milk Bar ... ³³

after the medical needs of the Sydney underworld as well as his regular patients.



Notes

- 1 Larry Writer, *Razor: a true story of slashers, gangsters, prostitutes and sly grog*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2002, pp xxii, 113-14.
- 2 *Razor*, pp.8,9.
- 3 'The Detective's Story', in *Kings Cross, 1936-1946*, being a collection of oral transcripts bound as *Memories, Kings Cross 1936-1946*, Kings Cross Community Aid and Information Service, 1981. Hereafter referred to as *Memories*.
- 4 Larry Writer, *Razor*, p.33.
- 5 CRS 34/3869/68.
- 6 Elizabeth Butel and Tom Thompson, *Kings Cross Album*, Atrand, 1984, p.11.
- 7 Dorothy Drain, *Memories*, p.57.
- 8 This quotation was sourced from Gavin Harris' detailed historical notes (The Cross Art & Books).
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- 10 Mary Gilmore, *Old Days, Old Ways*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1934.
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- 12 Peter Kirkpatrick, *The sea coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties*, St Lucia, QUP, 1992 p.357.
- 13 James Gleeson, *William Dobell*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1964. For the court case see pp.115-148.
- 14 Thelma Clune, *Memories*, p.96.
- 15 Peter Christians, former owner of Macleay Street Pharmacy, recorded in *Memories*, p.21.
- 16 Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union*, UNSW Press, 1998, p.207.
- 17 Peter Rees, *Killing Juanita: A True Story of murder and corruption*, Allen & Unwin, 2004, p.270.
- 18 Harry Stein, *A glance over an old left shoulder*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney 1994.
- 19 Various sources, including Margerite Johnson, 'The Witch of Kings Cross: Rosaleen Norton and the Australian Media', www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/collections/archives/int/rosaleennorton.
- 20 Emma Scott, Terry Blake and the 'Kings Cross Whisper 'The Way It Was'', issue 24 of *Kings Cross Newsletter*, Sept/Oct 1991.
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- 22 *Sun* 20th July, 1970.
- 23 Shirley Fitzgerald, *Sydney, 1842-1992*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1992, p.32.
- 24 Heather Radi, 'Street, Jessie Mary Grey, 1889-1970', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 16, Melbourne University Press, 2002.
- 25 *Memories*, p.58.
- 26 Rick Dowdle in Gavin Harris, et al, *It was a Riot! Sydney's First Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras*, for 78'ers Festival Events Group, 1998.
- 27 Lance Gowland in *It was a riot!...*
- 28 George Sprod, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross: Sydney's Kings Cross Ancient and Modern*, Quincunx Press, 1989, p10.
- 29 *Memories*, p.78.
- 30 Robin Eakin, *Aunts Up the Cross*, reprint, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1980.
- 31 *Aunts Up the Cross*, pp34-39, 44, 67-70.
- 32 Billy Thorpe, *Sex and thugs and rock 'n' roll: A Year in Kings Cross 1963-64*, MacMillan, Sydney, 1996.
- 33 *Memories*, p.20.

Rockwall, one of the original grand mansions.
This John Verge building still stands today,
tucked behind the Landmark Hotel in Macleay Street
 Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

Thanks to all the people who provided me with memories and material. Especially to Steve Mitchell of the Kings Cross Library, and Gavin Harris of The Cross Art and Books, which carries a large range of new and secondhand books about Kings Cross. **SF.**

You have now reached the end of the pavement inscriptions, though not the end of the story. More can be discovered by reading on through some of the literature mentioned in the endnotes, or by visiting the Kings Cross Library, or just by spending time talking to the locals. Contrary to the public perception that Kings Cross is a place for transients, back-packers and fly-by-nights, there are plenty of residents who have lived here for many years.

But before you go, notice that here Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street meet, in the apex of a triangle. Now look ahead of you, beyond the wide overpass across William Street, to the old fire station on the other side. This too sits on a triangular piece of land. Where you are standing, Darlinghurst Road is east of Victoria Street. Over there, Darlinghurst Road passes the fire station on the western side. At these points, the roads have 'crossed' and you are looking at the 'cross' of Kings Cross.

It was first named Queens Cross to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. An over-enthusiasm for the Queen resulted in many duplications of her name on the streets of Sydney, leading to confusion and lost mail. So in 1905 the City Council expunged various Victorias and Queens from the map, and Queen's Cross was changed to Kings Cross. The name is taken to apply to the surrounding area, and although the exact boundaries of 'The Cross' are only vaguely defined, everyone understands that it is a place unlike any other in the country.



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