ABBOTSFORD WALK

City of
Canada Bay

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Canada Bay has 35.1 kilometres of foreshore along the Parramatta River which offer attractive views.

The Wangal People - Indigenous Australians of the Canada Bay Area

Prior to European settlement the area now known as the City of Canada Bay was occupied by the Wangal clan (also spelt 'Wann-gal') whose name was derived from the word for their country. The Wangal were a clan of the Darug (sometimes spelt Dharug) tribe or language group. They called themselves the Eora, meaning 'the people'. The Wangal are believed to have occupied the area for over 20, 000 years.

First contact was made with local Aboriginals of the Wangal Clan by Captain John Hunter who led an exploration of the Parramatta River. On the 5th of February 1788 while having breakfast he was met by Wangal at the location now referred to as Breakfast Point. The Wangal called the area Booridiow-o-gule.

PARRAMATTA RIVER ABBOTSFORD, N. S. W.

Walkers will experience some wonderful views of Sydney. This walk starts and ends at Battersea Park, Battersea Street, Abbotsford. There is ample parking available. It is designed to help you learn about some of the history of the parks and buildings of Abbotsford. There are some steps and hills on the walk which will take about two hours walking at a leisurely pace, taking time to stop and look at the many interesting features along the way.

The suburb of Abbotsford takes its name from the home built by Sir Arthur Renwick in 1878. Renwick named his mansion Abbotsford House after the home of his favourite author, Sir Walter Scott.

During the summer months, the Wangal gathered much of their food from along the Parramatta River. The food consisted mainly of fish and shell fish and the remains of these meals, known as shell middens, may still be be seen at Rodd Park (Rodd Point).

Today few traces of Aboriginal occupation survive in the Canada Bay area other than a few cave painting sites, rock shelters and middens. It is believed that Parramatta Road was built upon an Aboriginal pathway which had been in use for centuries. The Wangal today are remembered by the Wangal Bushland Reserve (Mortlake) and Wangal Place (Five Dock).

1 Battersea Park Sea Wall

Battersea Park is a large predominantly grassed area bounded by a stone seawall to the river and a terraced sandstone cliff with concrete stair on the other. The stone terracing shows evidence of quarrying for construction of the sea wall. Towards the end of the 1930s Drummoyne Council commenced a programme of land reclamation. The first scheme centred around the foreshores of Hen and Chicken Bay and entailed the reclamation of mud flats and the erection of a sea wall. The park is notable also for its remnant indigenous trees particularly one large blackbutt.

Battersea Park and Sea Wall, 2007

2 Former Battersea Baths

The stone terraces are unfinished with drill holes still visible on the face. This forms part of the remains of a salt water swimming pool built by J.Cashman in 1910. The terraces were used by Sydney Rowing Club spectators during the 1920s. The name of the park appears to derive from the pleasure gardens found in Battersea, London.

3 Animal Quarantine Station

In 1916, the Commonwealth Government acquired land on the Abbotsford Peninsula, overlooking Hen and Chicken Bay for a new Animal Quarantine Station. The Station was officially gazetted in 1920. The site was chosen because, at the time, Abbotsford was still somewhat remote from any major residential development and it had direct waterfront access via the Parramatta River, making it suitable for bringing animals in on a punt and directly unloading into the Station site area. Road access behind the site was an added bonus.

The site was dedicated as a park in 1981 to be preserved for recreation purposes. Many of the structures associated with the Quarantine Station have been maintained. The Station played a pivotal role in the development of the Australian pastoral industry by ensuring that imported livestock was free from disease.

4 Riverview - 39 Abbotsford Parade

A magnificent late Federation style house, circa 1915 with high pitched complex, slate roof with terra cotta ridge capping, roughcast gable and shingled window hoods. An unusual feature of special note is the glass extension with outstanding etched pattern, which appears to be original. This is one of Abbotsford's few early grand houses to survive, particularly on the waterfront.

The gracious home Hexham was in Checkley Street. It was built ca.1884 by Captain John Bell, on the site of an earlier cottage which had been owned since at least 1870 by William Brown. Its grounds included the present site of the Quarantine Reserve. Sadly Hexham was demolished in 1982 after a fire on the premises.

5 Henry Lawson Park

Formerly known as Buckingham's Reserve, the park was dedicated on September 3rd, 1938 in honour of Henry Lawson. Two memorial trees were planted by Henry Lawson's daughter Bertha and Dame Mary Gilmore.

Henry Lawson lived in Abbotsford for a short time before his death and died in a house in Great North Road opposite Abbotsford Public School in 1922.

6 Chatham House - Nestle

Chatham House was built for Martin James in 1912 in an unusual late federation highly individual design. It was possibly exposed brick originally with a high pitched roof and a single large front gable.

Photo above and to right: Dedication of Henry Lawson Park on 3rd September 1938.

7 Abbotsford House

Sir Arthur Renwick, one of Sydney's leading physicians of his time, built Abbotsford House in 1878 and lived there until 1904. He named the mansion after the home of his favourite author Sir Walter Scott. A.E. Grace of Grace Bros. purchased the property in 1906. The Grace family sold the property in 1917 to the Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. (Nestlé) and their factory operated on the site until 1991.

Abbotsford House was one of Sydney's grandest Victorian mansions. A symmetrical design distinguished by two impressive towers on each front corner and a grand entry porch above imposing front steps. The outstanding, spired cupolas atop the twin towers and the elaborate decoration anticipates what became known as the Boom Style in the 1880s.

Abbotsford House , 2005

Aerial view of the former Nestle factory with Abbotsford House, June 1989

4

Lysaght Bros Wharf, 1930s

8 Lysaght BHP Wire Mills

As early as 1884, British steel sheet manufacturer, John Lysaght established the Sydney Wiremill or Lysaght Bros and Co. Ltd. on the Parramatta River at Five Dock. The introduction of the rabbit to Australia in 1859 and the plagues that followed created a huge market for wire netting. The size of the labour force reached its peak of 1300 in the 1930s when jobs were scarce. From 1974 the company operated as a subsidiary of BHP until it closed in 1998.

9 The Box Factory at Chiswick

The Co-operative Box Company of N.S.W. Ltd was one of the outstanding examples of secondary industry in the area. It commenced operations in Balmain in 1910 but moved to Chiswick in 1922 where a deep water frontage made the site more suitable for timber storage and case making. As most of the employees lived locally, the Box Company was an important factor in the economic life of the community.
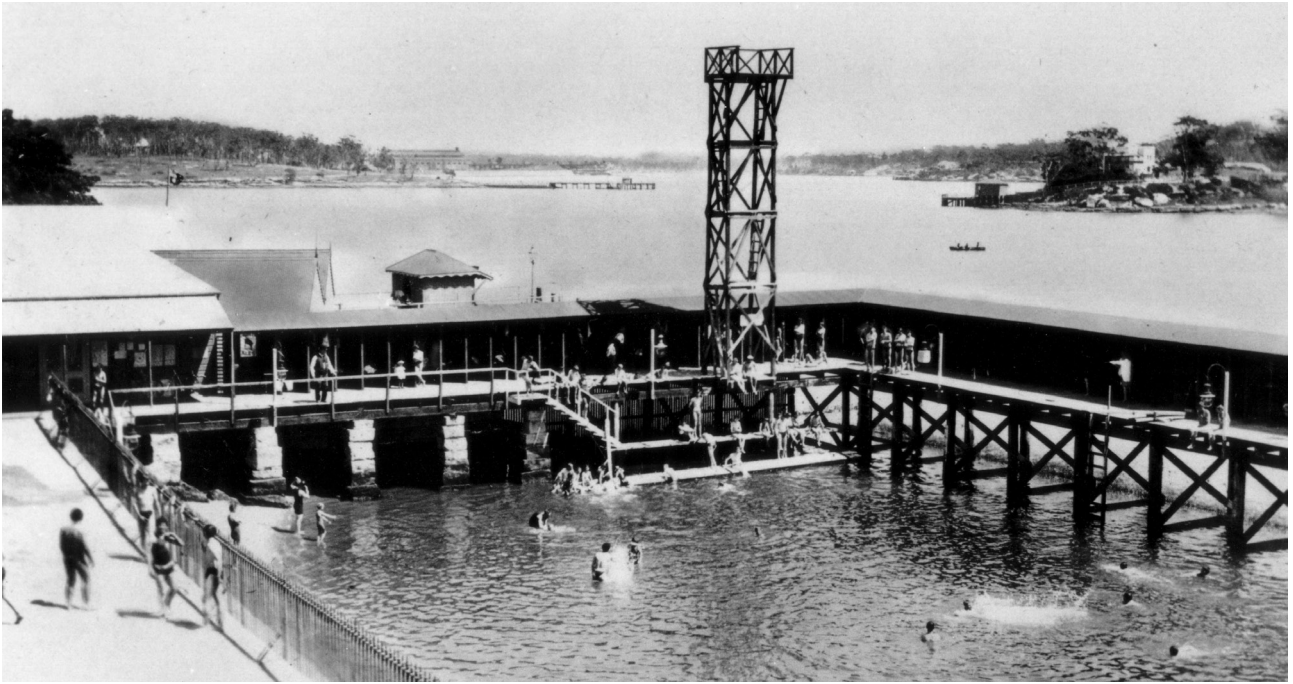

10 Gladesville Bridge Abutments

The original Gladesville Bridge opened in 1881 It was built in five spans with iron pylons and included a swing span which pivoted on a central pylon, giving two channels, each 20 m in width, for shipping to pass through. The structure was designed to be strong enough to carry light rail, and by 1910, the tramline had been extended from Drummoyne to Ryde.

Photo above: SSKaringal passing through the opening span of the old Gladesville Bridge, 1940s

Photo to left: The Box Factory at Chiswick, 1960s

Abbotsford Bath circa 1920. Broadhurst Postcards, Mitchell Library Collection

11 Steps

A small garden and landscape reserve on the corner of the street taking up the level change between street incorporating a set of stone steps and tree and undercover planting representative of the period of development.
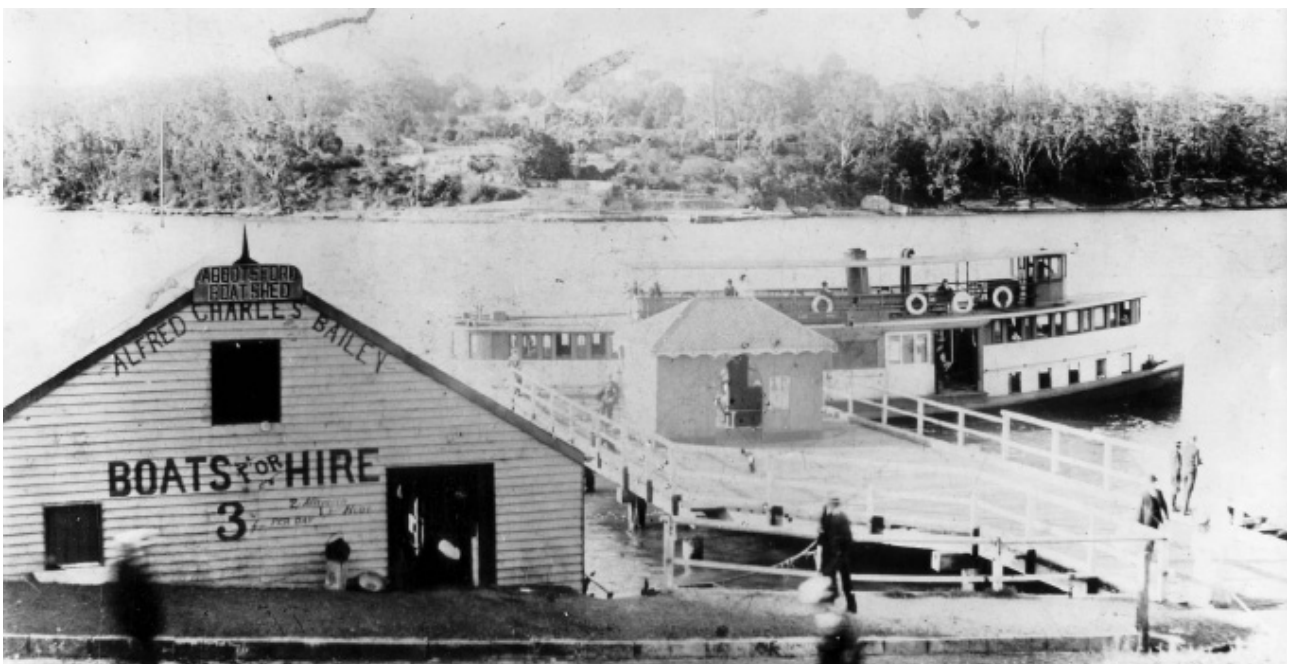
12 Werrell Reserve

The reserve is named after Mervyn Werrell, Drummoyne Mayor (1953-55). It is the site of the Abbotsford saltwater/tidal swimming pool and its stone walls are still visible. Swimming commenced there in 1907 and continued until the 1950s.

13 Boatshed

As early as 1908 a boatshed has been on this site. At that time it was Alfred Charles Bailey's Boatshed with boats for hire.

Bailey's Boatshed in 1908

14 Convict Pick Marks

Built by convict labour, the Great North Road connected Sydney Town to Wiseman's Ferry and thence to New England. Preliminary surveys for the Great North Road commenced in 1826 and a route following the ridgeline from the Parramatta Road through the Five Dock Farm to this location (now Abbotsford wharf) where a punt service was established.

The punt carried people, horses and carriages across the Parramatta River to Bedlam Point. The ferry operators, a married couple, were on duty 24 hours a day 7 days a week!

The early punts were eventually replaced by bridges that allowed trams and private vehicle crossings. The Bedlam ferry was superseded by the "old" Gladesville Bridge which opened in 1881.

15 Sydney Rowing Club

Prior to being purchased for the Sydney Rowing Club, this site was the location of the Red House, also known as the Red Cow Inn. It was purchased in 1872 for the use of the Sydney Rowing Club. The main part of the inn was destroyed by fire in 1934. A sandstone wall of the inn survives within the present licensed clubhouse.

Until 1946, the main premises of the Sydney Rowing Club were at Woolloomooloo Bay and the Abbotsford site was a branch of the club. It was decided to make Abbotsford the home of the rowing club and the boatshed, built in 1922 at Woolloomooloo Bay, was relocated to Abbotsford where it was reopened in 1947.
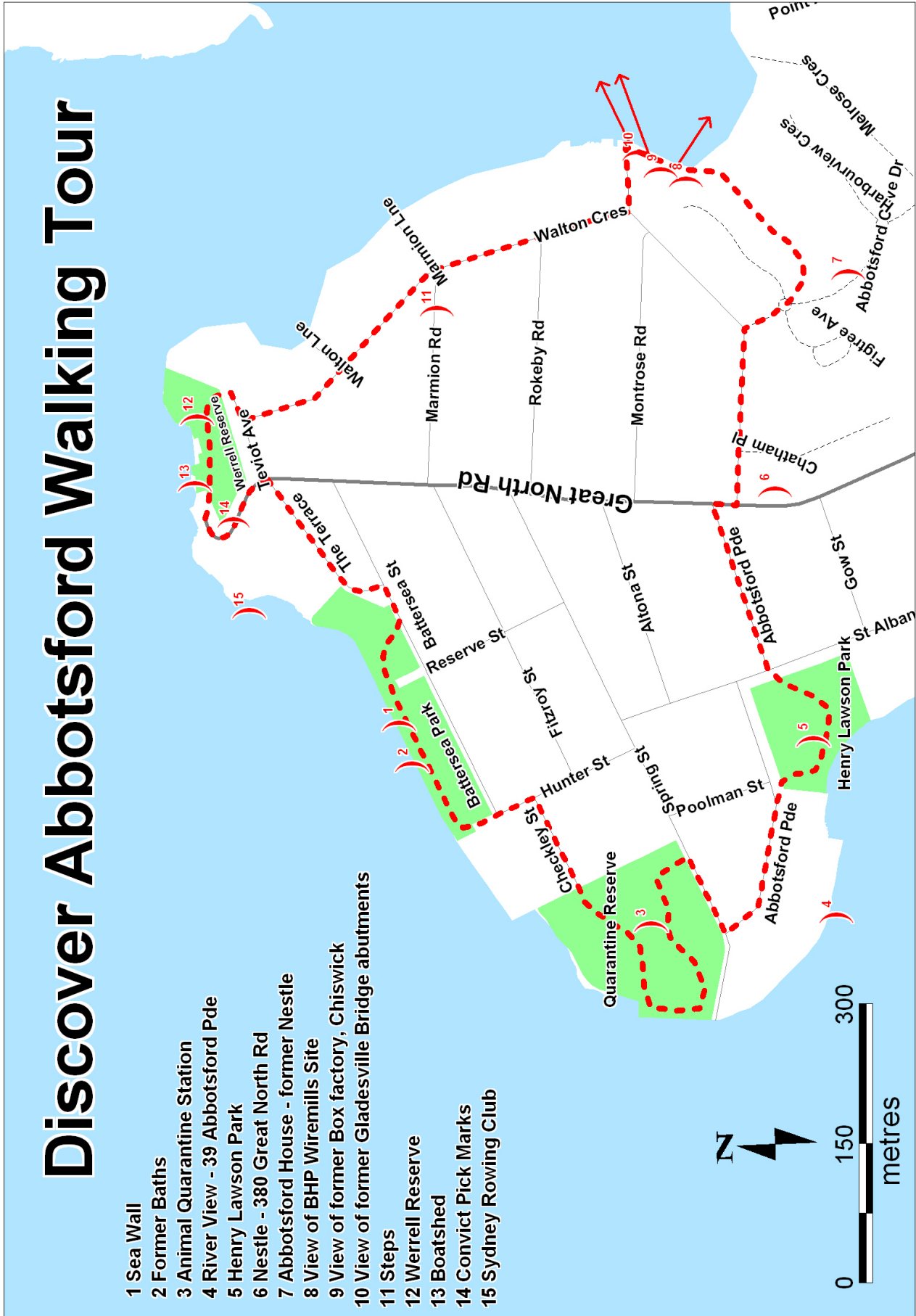
The finishing line of a 2000m rowing course on the River and for the Head of the River races is marked from Sydney Rowing Club (photo below).

Sydney Rowing Club, Abbotsford Branch, 1926

Discover Abbotsford Walking Tour

1 Sea Wall
2 Former Baths
3 Animal Quarantine Station
4 River View - 39 Abbotsford Pde
5 Henry Lawson Park
6 Nestle - 380 Great North Rd
7 Abbotsford House - former Nestle
8 View of BHP Wiremills Site
9 View of former Box factory, Chiswick
10 View of former Gladesville Bridge abutments
11 Steps
12 Werrell Reserve
13 Boatshed
14 Convict Pick Marks
15 Sydney Rowing Club

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metres

0   150   300