

History Walk Around Newtown

The walk will include stops at fifteen points during which aspects of historic interest will be discussed.

NEWTOWN MUNICIPALITY

The Municipality of Newtown, incorporated in 1862, comprised 480 acres within the existing electorate of Newtown. The area which became the Municipality was composed of a number of land grants, mostly issued in the 18th Century. In 1779, Governor Phillip set aside land for the Crown, the Church and -the area which concerns us to today- 200 acres for the support of a school teacher. No definite action was taken to utilize the 200 acres and it reverted to the Crown. In 1801 it formed part of the land granted to the Trustees of the Female Orphan Institution but, in 1806, the Trustees, upon being granted 1,000 acres at Bathurst in lieu of this land, agreed to its being granted to William Bligh for the purpose of erecting a residence. He named it 'Camperdown'. In 1793, Lieutenant Thomas Rowley was granted 100 acres which he called 'Kingston' and Superintendent of Convicts, Nicholas Devine was granted 120, 90 and 8 acres in 1793, 1794 and 1799 respectively. He amalgamated these grants to form 'Burren Farm'. Only a portion of each of these grants was enclosed by the borders of the Newtown Municipality. However, the entire area of the 25 acre grants to Private Dukes, Evans and Field, and the 30 acre grants to Caudell, Jenkins and Page, as well as Jane Codd's grant, all issued in 1794, were later incorporated. Smaller grants, all less than 3 acres issued in 1837, 1843 and 1869 made up the balance.

POINT 1: HOLLIS PARK

Easily the most elaborate group of dwellings in Newtown, built on land purchased by Magistrate John Kettle when Bligh's 'Camperdown' estate was subdivided. The houses, built in the 1880's, formed part of an overall planned development unusual in Sydney and considered a 'throw back' to the planned squares of London and Brighton. Hollis Park was resumed for education purposes in 1892 but leased for a peppercorn rental to the Newtown Municipality as a playground in 1911. It is named after Robert Hollis MLA, a prominent advocate of trade unionism, who lived in Newman Street. Warren Ball Avenue is named after the prominent Newtown Councillor and businessman and Georgina Street after Kettle's daughter.

POINT 2: KING STREET, CORNER GEORGINA STREET

Originally called Cook's River Road, this thoroughfare was named King Street in 1877 and even last century caused much concern with the dust, mud and noise created by the heavy traffic of drays, carriages, horse omnibuses, horse trams and, later, steam trams. One of Sydney's many toll bars (pictured) crossed King Street at the corner of Forbes Street. On King Street, between Georgina and Fitzroy Streets, stood Cambridge Hall where lived Eliza Donnithorne, the recluse around whose lonely vigil much local legend has grown.





NEWTOWN TOLL BAR



CAMBRIDGE HALL

POINT 3: CORNER KING STREET AND MISSENDEN ROAD

Site of O'Connell Town, one of the two hamlets from which the village of Newtown developed. Captain Maurice O'Connell married Bligh's daughter, Mary, thus acquiring her share of his 'Camperdown' estate which he subdivided in the 1840's. The Marlborough Hotel was once known as the Daniel Lambert Hotel whose namesake was a well-known identity who, it is claimed, upon his death in 1809, weighed over 52 stones! Many of the buildings in King Street were erected in the latter years of the 19th Century and exhibit many of the features of Victorian architecture. Nearby streets e. g. O'Connell, Bucknell, Brown and Egan are named after early landholders and residents.

POINT 4: CORNER KING STREET AND CHURCH STREET

A further view of the commercial centre of Newtown. King Street was always predominantly a retail street: the shops, which are mostly also residences, did not displace dwellings. Further down King Street is the old Methodist Church built in 1860. Many years ago, the showpiece of Brown Street was 'Leichhardt Lodge' built by W. H. Aldis and named after his friend, the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt. Stephen Campbell Brown lived in this house for many years.

POINT 5: BAPTIST CHURCH/ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH AND CEMETERY

Land was purchased for the Baptist Church in 1862 but services continued to be held in the Town Hall until the front part of the building was opened in 1873. The side wings were added over the next fifteen years. St. Stephen's Church was designed by Edmund Blacket. The foundation stone was laid in 1871 and the first service conducted in 1874. This church, of outstanding architectural significance, is in the English Decorated Revival style, in cruciform plan with side aisles, gallery, two vestries, porch and tower, with stone spire on the north side. It is built of Pyrmont sandstone with a slate roof and stone traceried windows. It replaced the original church, a squat brick building with a vestry and small belfry built in 1844-5 but destroyed by fire c. 1939 after seeing many years as a church, school and Sunday school. The cemetery was consecrated in 1841, since which there has been over 18,000 burials. Many graves were removed to this site from the old George Street Cemetery to make way for the Town Hall and from the old Devonshire Street Cemetery to make way for Central Railway Station. Amongst those buried here are Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, Sir Maurice O'Connell, Alexander Macleay of Elizabeth Bay House and many luminaries of the early colony, especially from this Municipality.

POINT 6: LENNOX STREET

Church Avenue Terrace is a neat, single-storey terrace built in the 1880's. Terrace and terrace-type houses built in pairs were the dominant forms of domestic dwelling constructed in the Municipality, mostly in the boom period of the 1880's. Most premises were rented, but often the owner of a terrace or pair resided in one of the houses. In 1890, a commodious, two-storey terrace house in Newtown was let for c. 30/- per week. Most terraces comprised between four and eight houses, but terraces of between ten and twenty were not uncommon.

Down Mary Street can be seen the Post Office in King Street, cnr. Erskineville Road, built in 1890 on the site of an older Post Office. The first Post Office in Newtown was in King Street, near Missenden Road.



NT 7: CORNER LENNOX AND AUSTRALIA STREETS

Court House Hotel is one of the few old hotels not located on King Street or Enmore Road. By 1878 there were 24 hotels within Newtown's 480 acres; by 1892 there were 29, % of which were strategically located on the two main thoroughfares. Judging from the Court House Hotel, they were well patronised indeed! The corner furniture shop was once Dibble's bakery, the produce of which regularly won prizes at the Easter Show. The Infants' School in Australia Street was built in 1889 to alleviate the severe overcrowding being experienced in the nearby school in King Street.

NT 8: FIRE STATION AND COURTHOUSE

The Fire Station was designed by the Government Architect, William McRae and built in 1913. It replaced an earlier 1892 construction. In the earlier days of the Colony, fire fighting was the responsibility of the insurance companies. Until 1879, all court cases were heard in the old Central Police Courts in the city, where the Queen Victoria Building now stands. The Newtown Courthouse, designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet, was built between 1833-35. Construction is of stuccoed brick with a slate roof.

NT 9: NEWTOWN BRIDGE

This is the site of Webster's weatherboard store around which a small hamlet grew, to become known as the 'new town', thus Newtown. It is, and always has been, the focus of the suburb. The library was Newtown's first Town Hall, originally built as the School of Arts. The former ANZ Bank building was built in 1875 and the CBC Bank in 1885. Across King Street is the Newtown Railway Station, the sites of the old markets and the old 'bus and truck sheds and a number of old hotels, much altered.

NT 10: CORNER ENMORE ROAD AND STATION STREET

Station Street is so named because it led directly to the original Newtown Railway Station. Across the railway line is St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, designed by architect Thomas Rowe who also designed the Great Synagogue. The Church was opened in May, 1869.



REIBY HOUSE

Across Enmore Road, on the site now occupied by high rise units, stood Reiby House (pictured), built by noted emancipist and entrepreneur Mary Reiby, who entertained lavishly and was frequently seen driving to the city in her coach drawn by white horses. The convict-built house had solid stone walls two feet thick, floors of hardwood, massive cedar fittings and huge cellars which ran the length of the ground floor. The casement windows on the ground floor were provided with shutters both inside and out, some of which were provided with secret bells as a precaution against intruders.



HENRY HENNINGES
Older Baker Walkin and Wilson Streets, Newtown



Avenue Section of King Street

POINT 11: ENMORE ROAD, OPPOSITE REIBY STREET

On the corner of Enmore Road and Reiby Street is the Friendly Societies' Dispensary built in 1902 and enlarged in 1912, It served the needs of a number of Lodges already established in Newtown, providing sick and funeral benefits. Cost per member, in 1912, was sixpence each month.



STANMORE HOUSE

Hidden behind the liquor shop -and indeed behind a thousand alterations- is Stanmore House (pictured), Newtown's only surviving old mansion now barely recognisable and very forlorn in comparison with its former glory. It was built in 1847 and 1855 by Mary Reiby for her daughter Elizabeth Anne who married Captain Joseph Long Innes. It was of Colonial Regency design with a central entrance and gable, wide verandah and capped columns. It is claimed that Sir Joseph Long Innes, who was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1873 and was one-time Attorney General of NSW, was born here in 1834. James Pemmell, parliamentarian and wealthy flour merchant, lived here until his death in 1906.

POINT 12: REIBY/RAWSON/STATION STREETS

A good cross-section of Newtown housing dating largely from the 19th Century, ranging from the tiny houses of Dora Terrace in Reiby Street to the quite elaborate Ulster Terrace and San Jose Terrace in Station Street, Until the 1880's the area to the south of Station Street was dominated by Camden Villa, later Camden College, one-time home of Sir Thomas Holt MLC who, in 1863,

donated it to the Congregational Church for use as a theological college. It was used as a finishing school for young ladies (see picture) before being demolished in 1888 to make way for more terraced housing.



POINT 13: HOLT STREET, CORNER KING STREET

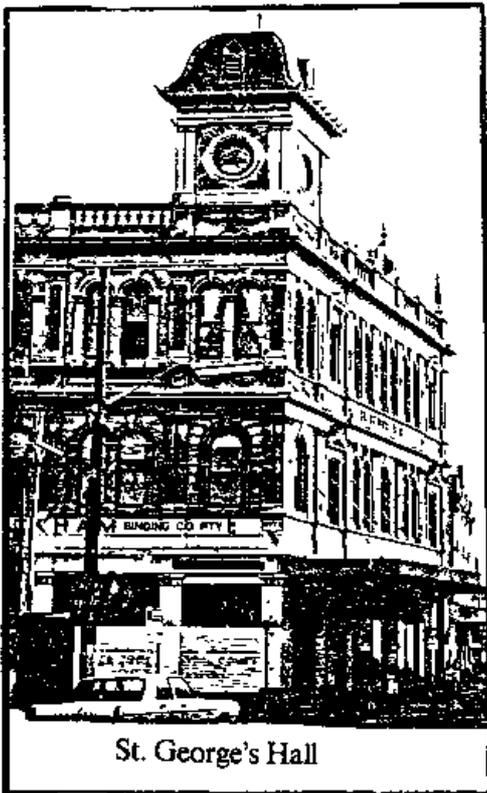
Another view of King Street. The old brickyards to the south were once a hive of industry and site of the first steam brick making works in NSW, established in 1871. Prior to that, sand-stock bricks were made by hand. Newtown Congregational Church, now the Greek Orthodox Church, opened in 1856 was built on land donated by Hon. J. Fairfax, founder of the Sydney Morning Herald. The first pastor was Rev. S. C. Kent, also principal of nearby Camden College. The school which adjoined the church was intended to provide a basic education for students who would proceed to the College for theological training.

POINT 14: NEWTOWN SUPERIOR PUBLIC SCHOOL

This was the first of many government schools to be opened in the Municipality. It was designed by G. A. Mansfield and commenced operations in 1877. It is of Victorian Gothic style, with walls of brick on stone foundations. Alterations to the roof have somewhat diminished the original appearance of the building. In 1882 there were almost 1,000 pupils attending the school and the crowded conditions brought on periodic outbursts from the concerned and scandalised citizenry.

POINT 15: ST. GEORGE'S HALL

This prominent Newtown landmark was built by a Joint Stock Company in 1887 to the design of architect David Ross. The construction is of moulded stuccoed brickwork with very elaborate interior which has been partially restored. It was opened by Sir Henry Parkes in 1887 and contained a number of halls, meeting rooms and shops. It was the largest hall in Sydney until the Town Hall was constructed in 1888.



Today's inspection of this historic building has been made possible by the generous donation of time by Ms. Diane Jones and with the permission of the Government Architect's Branch of the Public Works Department and that of the Department of Education.

Our thanks to all, especially to Diane.

Prepared by Marie Ryan as part of the ongoing Newtown History Project.

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