

Wander on the Water

29 February 2004

An event organised by The Glebe Society Inc and supported by a generous grant from the Council of the City of Sydney

The idea for *Wander on the Water* grew out of the Society's immensely successful *Wander and Wonder* held last year. Both events focus on the Glebe waterfront but this time it will be viewed from a different perspective, a perspective many have never seen. Last year's event attracted the attention of the City Council to the long-awaited foreshore walk and resulted in a commitment to spend more than \$13 million to complete the project, including the restoration of *Bellevue*. While we can't expect such a dramatic outcome on this occasion, *Wander on the Water* will give many Glebe residents an insight into the exciting—or worrying—things that are happening around our foreshore.

The map in this leaflet identifies a number of these sites and your guides will tell you more about them as we cruise past. We have also included further commentaries, many of which draw on articles in past editions of Glebe Society *Bulletin*, on some of these sites.

Waterfront car park

Waterways announced plans in March last year to build a car park and a boat launching ramp on part of the Pyrmont approach to the old Glebe Island Bridge that was previously ear-marked for a community park (see *Bulletin 4/2003*).

Along with other community groups, the society condemned the decision. The Society is concerned that the facility will compromise the foreshore walk, while rowers are concerned about an increase in the number of power boats in Blackwattle Bay. Waterways has not yet responded to representations made through our local MP in mid-2003.



The three bridges. In the late 1990s, the Society proposed that a marked walkway be established from Annandale to Pyrmont as part of the Sydney Harbour foreshore Millennium Track. A leaflet showing the route of the walk and describing places of interest was produced, but Leichhardt Council did not proceed with marking the walk with the specially designed logo (above right). Maybe we will have more success with the Sydney City Council?



Foreshore walk from Glebe to city

Bulletin 9/2003 carried a detailed account of plans by the City Council to complete the foreshore walk from Bicentennial Park to Bridge Road, and by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHEFA) to extend this walk through Pyrmont to the city.

Highlights include:

The Anchorage: Sydney City Council is negotiating to buy this site as part of the foreshore walk and establish a park with plantings, seats, lighting, bike racks, signage etc, and new water access steps and rehabilitation of a small beach area.

“Link site” (adjoins *The Anchorage*): 90m of new foreshore walkway/ timber boardwalk, and an associated park similar to that in front of *The Anchorage* with a mangrove/wetland landscape.

Blackwattle Bay Park: 450m of new and upgraded foreshore walkway with associated landscaping (plantings, seats, lighting, signage etc). Upgraded BBQ and new public toilet facilities are proposed. The refurbishment of the historic waterfront house *Bellevue* for

cafe/cultural uses is proposed, with an adjacent mooring pontoon for visiting boats. This site also includes historic stone docks and cranes and restored small beach areas.

Former Fletchers site: A new foreshore promenade and a 7200m² park is due for completion mid-2005. The site includes a 5m wide promenade, water steps and the restoration of the historic Walter Burley Griffin incinerator.

“Glebe High School” site includes a new foreshore walkway with associated landscaping. Water access including ramps for small craft (dragon boats, kayaks, small sailing boats) and stair access to restored beach areas is proposed. The site may include restored mangrove/wetland areas providing an interpretive and educational aspect for the public and students.

Pyrmont Bridge Road A key pedestrian and cycle link, and an upgrade of the footpath link to the Sydney Fish Market and Wentworth Park is proposed.

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What's happening around our foreshores

1 Fish Market: Redevelopment plans released for public comment, but no date set for completion. The Society has criticised the narrowness of the foreshore promenade and the tall commercial building proposed for the rear of the site. City Council says the plan "turns its back" on Pyrmont. Pluses are improved access and parking, a grass square between the main buildings and improved wholesale facilities.

2 Wentworth Park: This could be a great waterside park, but first the greyhound track must be relocated. Successive Lord Mayors have promised action and it appears that one of the clubs is now prepared to move. The Blackwattle Bay waterfront must be linked to the park, and suitable lessees found for the wharves on Bridge Road.

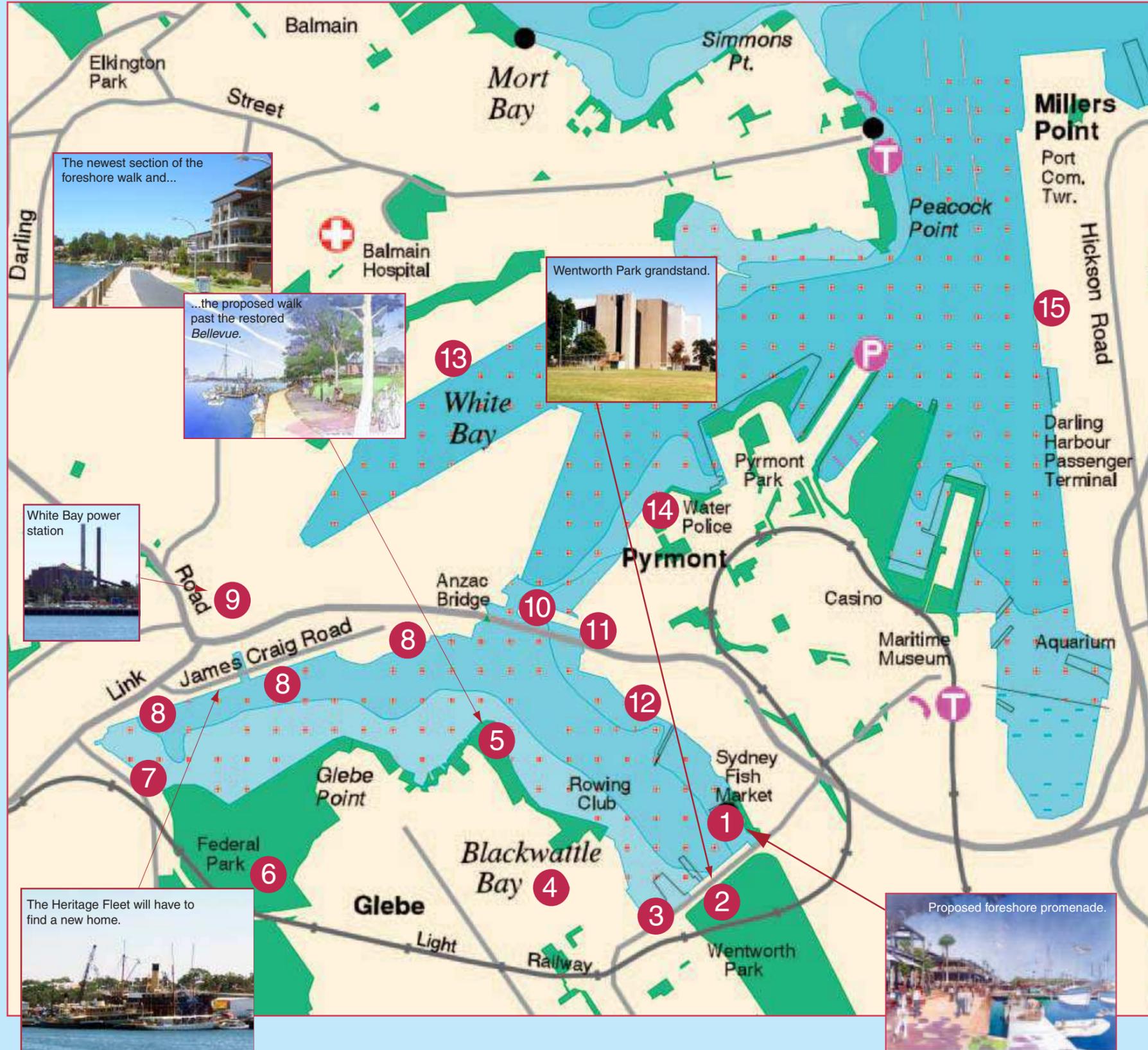
3 Pioneer Concrete batch plant: Numerous suggestions have been made for relocation of this facility which, because gravel is delivered by sea, is regarded as part of the "working harbour".
Foreshore walk starts here. The City of Sydney has committed \$13.2 million to this project. There are plans to extend the walk along the Blackwattle Bay wharves to the Fish Market and on to the city.

4 Australand's Glebe Harbour: Comprising 135 flats and townhouses, this is the last of the big foreshore residential developments in Glebe.
Walter Burley Griffin incinerator: This modest but heritage-rated building will be restored and form the centre piece of a significant area of open space - one of the final pieces of the foreshore walk jigsaw.

5 Bellevue (Venetia): To be restored as part of the City Council's foreshore walk project. As with the WBG incinerator, a sustainable use for the building must be found.

6 Jubilee Park grandstand: Also to be restored by the City Council.

7 Rozelle Bay (west): Waterways' plans for this area include a sales facility for large commercial catamarans. At the other end of the scale, the "Watermen" group has proposed a launching facility for small recreational craft. Maybe we'll slip some mangroves in somewhere.



8 Rozelle Bay (north): The Heritage Fleet will shortly have to move from Rozelle Bay under Waterways plans to lease the waterfront to commercial interests. Blackwattle Bay is a long-shot alternative location. A dry boat storage for up to 1200 vessels and a marine engineering facility are planned, and the super yacht marina stays. Rowing clubs are not amused. Waterways has promised public access through the waterfront businesses subject to safety and security considerations.

9 White Bay power station: some time ago the Government announced that this major site will be redeveloped, but not for housing. SHFA will release a conservation management plan soon.

10 Glebe Island Bridge: permanently open to allow maritime traffic to use Blackwattle Bay with the exception of an annual bike ride. Various ideas to close it more often and create a tourist precinct extending from the Fish Market to the Heritage Fleet site have not attracted official favour.

11 Anzac Bridge approach: Waterways proposes to build boat ramps and a carpark on a site previously earmarked for a community park. The announcement was greeted with protests; nothing has been heard of the proposal recently.

12 The Bank Street site: The foreshore walk will pass through this area to join up with areas being developed as part of *Jackson's Landing*. Time scale and design uncertain due to private ownership of much of the site.

13 White Bay container wharves: Now closed and activities are being moved to Darling Harbour. Protests have focused on the implications of the move for Sydney Harbour as a working port; a bigger worry for locals is the likely nature of the development that will replace the wharves.

14 Water Police site: to be redeveloped when the Water Police move across the harbour. Currently development plans are opposed by a very active group of Pyrmont residents who want the area to become a park.

15 Darling Harbour container wharves: container activities will be consolidated here before they are eventually moved to Port Kembla and Newcastle. This probably makes sense to the stevedoring companies but the rest of us are somewhat puzzled about the wisdom of increasing the number of trucks carrying containers along Sussex Street.

Many “make or break” issues to be decided

Over the next few years decisions will be made that will have a major impact on the waterfront in Glebe and nearby areas. Some of these are:

Container wharves: The White Bay container wharves have been closed and activity moved to the Sussex Street wharves in the city. The site is now available for redevelopment. Because the railway corridor servicing the wharves will no longer be required, this raises the question of the future of the Rozelle marshalling yards. Together these sites could be one of the biggest prizes for apartment developers. Anyone for “Jackson’s Landing North”?

Rozelle Bay: In *Bulletins* 8/2002 and 1/2003 Collin Hills explained Waterways plans for the bay. These include:

- the “super yacht” marina established for the Olympic Games. Residents were promised this would only be temporary, but Waterways now denies it gave this undertaking.
- A massive on-shore marina will store up to 1200 vessels, mainly power boats, on racks.
- The Heritage Fleet’s site will be reduced and eventually the Fleet will have to leave the bay. Blackwattle Bay could be an alternative (see *Bulletin* 1/2003).

Watermen request a place for canoes

Bulletin 10/2003 reported that a group called “The Watermen” has proposed a “soft” boat launching facility on Rozelle Bay.

The group explained that the concept is based on historical use of Sydney’s waterways and the need for present community access to them. The watermen of early Sydney operated from the most convenient beach. They quickly spread around the harbour but over the years seawalls have blocked easy access to the water for small craft.

The Watermen have asked the City Council to make a beach or billabong type of access point with a pebbly or sandy beach in the area near the junkyard at the western end of Rozelle Bay.

Public access to the Rozelle Bay is included in the plan, but is likely to be heavily restricted due to safety and security considerations.

The final decision on the Rozelle Bay proposals rests with the Minister for Planning.

Blackwattle Bay wharves: SHFA is preparing concepts for the future use of these wharves and will call for expres-

sions of interest. SHFA’s documentation will determine who bids and what they propose. It is likely that the wharves will be offered in small parcels making it easier for the Heritage Fleet to bid.

If handled imaginatively the development of Blackwattle Bay presents a great opportunity to link a renewed Wentworth Park to the waterfront.

From power station to cultural centre?

The former White Bay power station could become one of the most interesting projects on our waterfront. The station was built in 1917 to power the city’s trams and trains and was decommissioned in 1983.

The site is now owned by SHFA which has prepared a conservation management plan that will soon be released for comment. The site is heritage listed and according to SHFA cannot be used for housing.

SHFA will seek expressions of interest for the building’s future use. In Brisbane an old power station has been converted into a cultural centre.

After a visit to the power station, Neil Macindoe wrote in *Bulletin* 8/2002: “I could not help being moved once I entered the buildings. The 1950 Boiler House now contains only one boiler, a huge and complex piece of machinery which can be closely inspected. Otherwise the vast building, five storeys high, is empty, its windows soaring for its full height. The control room, whole walls of bakelite and glass dial and switches, is pure science fiction, a natural film set.

“The Turbine House is long rather than tall, but just as spectacular in its own way.”

The Glebe waterfront when industry rather than fashionable apartments dominated.

Photo by Tony Larkum

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Foreshore walk

SHFA is responsible for planning the walkway from the Fish Market to the city. It includes in its key strategy objectives:

- complete foreshore access on the peninsula in line with the State government’s initiative for a foreshore walk from Woolloomooloo to Blackwattle Bay by actioning the development of the missing foreshore links;
- to provide temporary measures over the water in areas of missing links until such time as foreshore access can be provided on land; and
- coordinate and integrate the provision of foreshore promenade development in the remaining areas of the peninsula and Blackwattle Bay.

In *Bulletin* 9/2003, Bruce Davis sounded a cautionary note: “The Lord Mayor’s announcement on the foreshore walk is good news indeed... However there’s a long way to go before the job is done... We may have won a battle but the war is not over.”

