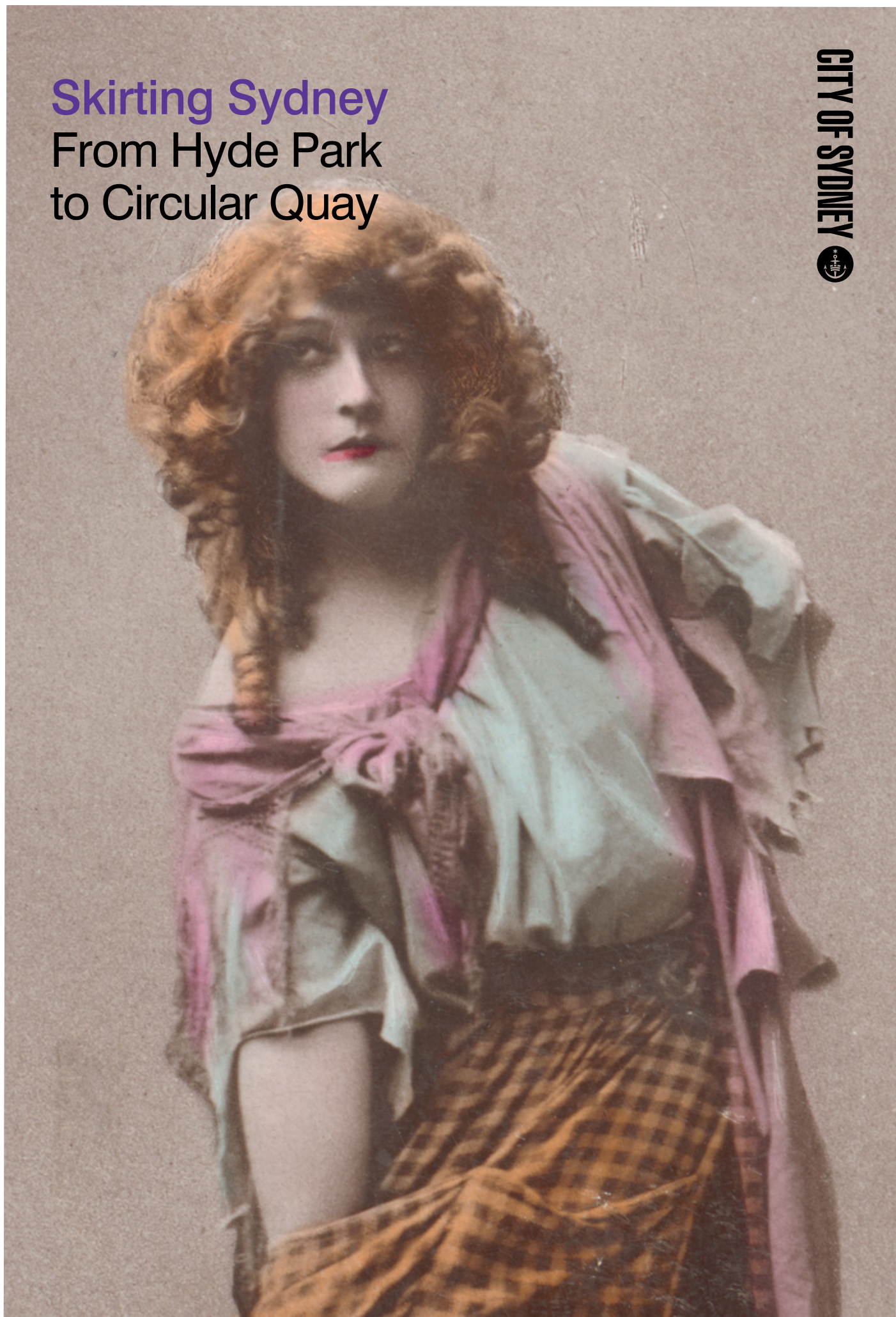


# Skirting Sydney

## From Hyde Park to Circular Quay

CITY OF SYDNEY



# Skirting Sydney From Hyde Park to Circular Quay

The majestic Queen Victoria Building stands in the heart of the city as a monument to a much-loved and long-reigning Queen, although she never visited Sydney. But what of the other, less obvious, city spaces where Sydney women went about their daily lives? Skirting Sydney pinpoints the many sites across the city where girls and women lived and worked, where they were educated and entertained, and where pioneering activist women held meetings, published journals and sometimes in the process expanded the possibilities for all women's lives.



Allow 1.5 hours for this walk. The closest railway station at the start of the walk is Museum. There are several cafes and different examples of architectural styles along the way. Start at **Australian Hall (1)**, 150–152 Elizabeth Street.

1

## Australian Hall



SECTION OF ABORIGINAL MEETING in Australian Hall, Sydney, organised by Aborigines' Progressive Association mourners.

Day of Mourning protest, 1938  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

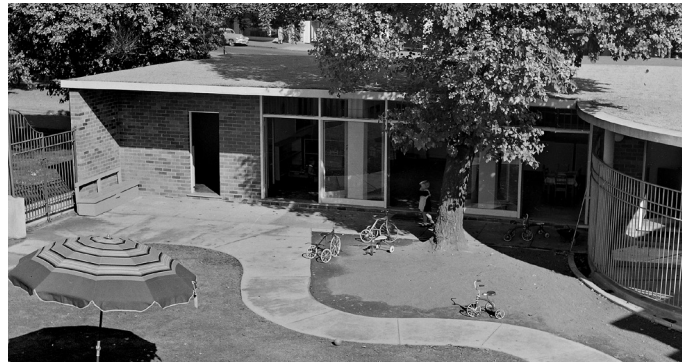
Australian Hall on Elizabeth Street was the site of the Day of Mourning protest on 26 January 1938. Women, both Aboriginal and white, were active in the campaign for full citizenship rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the 1930s onwards.



Stay on the eastern side of Elizabeth Street and head north to Hyde Park, stopping on the corner of Park Street at the site of the former **Women's Amenity Centre (2)**.

2

## Women's Amenity Centre



Hyde Park Women's Amenity Centre, 1954 (Photograph: City of Sydney Archives)

The provision of 10 underground public toilets in Sydney in 1901 to 1912 was a response to public health concerns following the outbreak of Bubonic Plague in January 1900. But these toilets were for men only. Sydney's first women's toilets were built in 1910 in Hyde Park south, on the corner of Park and Elizabeth streets. These toilets were placed inside a domestic cottage-style building, obscured with foliage. In the 1950s the women's toilets were replaced by the Women's Amenity Centre, a purpose-built childcare centre for working women. The building was demolished in 2000.



Cross to the other side of Elizabeth Street and head north to the building at 179 Elizabeth Street. **The Women's Club (3)** was located on level 4.

3

## Women's Club



A portrait of Dr Mary Booth by JS Watkins, c1930s  
(Painting: National Library of Australia)

The Women's Club was founded in 1901 by Dr Mary Booth, an early woman doctor, as a place where women interested in public, professional, scientific and artistic work 'might spend their leisure moments and associate together'. The first committee also included Rose Scott, pioneer of women's suffrage in NSW. The club had 807 members by 1929. The Sydney University Women Graduates Association and Professional Women Workers Association were also associated with the club. The club still meets at rooms on level 4, 179 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.



Continue along Elizabeth Street, turn left into Market Street and stop on the corner. David Jones department store across the road was formerly the site of **Sydney Girls High School (4)**.

4

## Sydney Girls High School site



Girls High School, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 1938  
(Photograph: Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria)

Sydney High School was established on the corner of Elizabeth and Market streets in 1883. Boys were taught on the ground floor and girls on the first floor, with separate entrances. Sydney Girls High was the first school in NSW to prepare girls for entrance to university. The school remained on this corner block until 1921, when it moved to Moore Park. Many distinguished Sydney women were and are former students.



Cross over to the other side of Market Street and continue west, stopping at the corner of Pitt Street. Look toward the Myer shopping complex opposite which was once the location of **Farmers Department Store (5)**.

5

## Farmers Department Store (former)



Corner of George and Market streets, showing the fire-damaged Crown Studios in 1919, shortly before Farmer and Co extended onto the site  
(Photograph: City of Sydney Archives)

There was a proliferation of large department stores in central Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s. One of the largest and well regarded was Farmer and Co, with frontages on George, Pitt and Market streets. Farmers started as a drapery business established by Caroline Farmer, with her husband Joseph, in 1839. The store was originally opposite the Victoria Theatre in Pitt Street. Their nephew William Farmer took over the business in the 1850s. He built this purpose-built department store further south along Pitt Street in the 1880s. Farmers department store continued to expand. It was regarded as a social institution in Sydney for much of the 20th century.



Turn right onto Pitt Street, then right onto King Street. Your next stop is at the front of the imposing car park entry at 135 King Street, the former site of **Quong Tart's Tea Rooms (6)**.

6

## Quong Tart's Tea Rooms (former)



Quong Tart's Tea Rooms, c1890s (Photograph: Society of Australian Genealogists)

The women-only upstairs room at Quong Tart's Tea Rooms at 137 King Street was the site of the early meetings of the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW, founded in 1891. A decade of organised activism followed, and NSW women got the vote in 1902. Chinese tea merchant Mei Quong Tart's tea-rooms here, and later in the Queen Victoria Building, were also used for meetings of other women's organisations, such as the Kindergarten Union. Maybanke Anderson was a founding member of the league and the union.



Continue along King Street, cross over Elizabeth Street, and walk up to **St James' Church (7)**.

7

## St James' Church



Plaque showing St James' Church, Sydney, after 1824  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Nellie Stewart (1858–1931) was baptised in this church. She toured England, India and the USA, building a solo career in comic and grand opera. In May 1901, she sang at the concert celebrating the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament. In 1902, she first played Nell Gwynne in *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, a production so successful that she became known as Sweet Nell. In 1910 she raised £3,000 to buy radium for Sydney Hospital which named its children's ward after her. There is also a Nellie Stewart monument in the Royal Botanic Garden, erected in 1938 by the Nellie Stewart Old Drury Club. She is commemorated with a wall tablet at St James' Church on the King Street façade.



Cross over Macquarie Street to **Hyde Park Barracks (8)**.

8

## Hyde Park Barracks

Hyde Park Barracks, a former convict dormitory, was adapted in 1848 as Sydney's Female Immigration Depot, to protect and process women arriving in the colony under various government schemes. Thousands of impoverished working-class women were housed here from 1848 to 1886, some with their children, before starting new lives in Australia. A contemporary monument installed in the stone wall outside by Hossein and Angela Valamanesh commemorates the many Irish immigrants and 'workhouse' girls who came to NSW fleeing the Irish Famine.



Walk north along Macquarie Street and pause outside **Sydney Hospital (9)**.

9

## Sydney Hospital



Lucy Osburn, c1875 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Sydney Hospital was the first in Australia to employ female nurses on the Nightingale model. Lucy Osburn, Lady Superintendent here in 1868 to 1884, laid the foundations of modern nursing in Australia. The Lucy Osburn-Nightingale Foundation Museum commemorates her.



To the left of Sydney Hospital on Macquarie Street is **Parliament House (10)**.

10

## Parliament House



Millicent Preston Stanley, c1950 (Photograph: NSW Parliamentary Archives)

Millicent Preston Stanley (1883–1955) was the first woman elected to the NSW Parliament in 1925. She combined a lifelong interest in women's rights and political participation with conservative politics and a cutting turn of phrase. Called a battle-axe by a heckler at a political meeting, she retorted: 'A battle-axe is a pretty useful weapon if it's kept sharp and bright'. President of Sydney's Feminist Club in 1919–34 and again in the 1950s, she fought for better maternal health, government family payments and maternal custody rights.



Continue further along Macquarie Street to the State Library of NSW's **Mitchell Library (11)**. Turn right into Shakespeare Place to view the building's grand entrance.

11

## Mitchell Library



Ida Leeson in 1933, shortly after being appointed as Mitchell Librarian  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Ida Leeson was appointed the second Mitchell Librarian in 1932. Ida paved the way for other women to gain senior roles at the library, including Jean Fleming Arnot who became head cataloguer in 1950. Nita Kibble, appointed principal research librarian in 1919–45, was another woman who rose through the male-dominated senior ranks of the library. The Mitchell Library holds collections of many early feminists including Rose Scott, founder of the Australian women's suffrage movement.



Cross at the lights on Macquarie and Bent streets. Walk south along Macquarie Street toward Hunter Street until you arrive at **Wyoming (12)** 175 Macquarie Street.

12

## Wyoming



Wyoming, corner Hunter and Macquarie streets, c1921  
(Photograph: City of Sydney Archives)

Wyoming was built as professional chambers and residential flats for grazier John O'Brien in 1909. The 8-storey building was designed by architect John Burcham Clamp in the Federation Free Style. Rooms at this prestige location were in high demand from the medical profession. Two of the first tenants were professional women. One was Jessie Aspinall, the first female medical resident officer appointed to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1906.



Turn left into Hunter Street and then turn right and walk to Bligh Street. On the left side of the road, near the hotel, is the former **Savoy Theatre (13)**.

13

## Savoy Theatre (former)



Jean Garling performing with the Lightfoot-Burlakov Ballet, c1920s  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Trained as an architect in 1923, Louise Lightfoot turned her skill and talent in dance into a flourishing career, first in classical ballet and later in Indian dance. Louisa and Russian folk dancer Misha Burlakov opened the Lightfoot-Burlakov dance school and studio in Circular Quay in 1929. Students from the school performed all over Sydney, including for functions at the Feminist Club and Theosophical Society. Louisa's dance company, First Australian Ballet, performed at the Savoy Theatre in the 1930s. Lightfoot is said to have introduced Indian dance to Australia in 1947, when she both taught the dance form and toured with Ananda Shivaram, the first Indian dancer to come to Australia.



Continue northeast on Bligh Street. Turn left onto Bent Street, walk through the square to the right and onto Young Street. Stay on Young Street, cross at the lights and turn left onto Loftus Lane. Continue on Loftus Lane until Loftus Street. On the left side of the corner was the former site of The **Building Publishing Co (14)**.

14

## Building Publishing Co (former)



Florence Taylor with her staff in front of The Building Publishing Co, Loftus Street, 1950 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Florence Taylor (1879–1969) has been claimed as Australia's first woman architect, engineer and pilot. The Building Publishing Co, founded by Florence and her husband George in 1907, operated out of 16–20 Loftus Street from 1924 to 1962. Florence edited several trade journals including *Building* magazine, providing contemporary commentary on architecture, design and urban planning. She was a founding member of the Town Planning Association of NSW. Despite completing articles, having a flourishing domestic architecture practice and obtaining glowing references, the NSW Institute of Architects knocked back her application for associate membership in 1907. It was not until 1920 that the institute finally invited Florence into their ranks.



Turn right onto Loftus Street, cross over the road and stop in the square which is bordered by **Reiby Place (15)**.

15

## Reiby Place



Mary Reibey c1835 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Today Reiby Place is lined with slick glass and concrete, but its name commemorates one of Sydney's earliest entrepreneurs. Mary Reibey (1777–1855) was a convict who became a highly successful businesswoman with interests in hotels, trading, shipping, farming and city buildings. Reibey owned land across the city including a waterfront house near today's Macquarie Place. She was a governor of the Free Grammar School and a founding member of the Bank of NSW, as well as active in church and charity work. Reibey is featured on the \$20 note.



Continue walking along Reiby Place toward Pitt Street, arriving at an artwork installed on building to the right, **Patchwork of Light (16)**.

16

## Patchwork of Light

*Patchwork of Light* is an array of 10 brightly coloured light boxes, positioned high up at the Pitt Street end of Reiby Place. Boldly emblazoned with figures and phrases in the Sydney Aboriginal language and English, the artwork brings our city's Aboriginal, European, political and sporting histories to life. While examining modern-day Sydney, artist Lara Schnitger became inspired by the historical figure of Mary Reibey. 'Like a quilt made of light, my art will suffuse Reiby Place with brilliant light, images and phrases of empowerment, making it safe to walk there.' The artwork is inherently a feminist reclaiming of space and history. Working in collaboration with Wiradjuri/Yuin elder Auntie Bronwyn Penrith, Schnitger developed the figure of the Eora fisherwoman as central to the artwork: embracing Australia's Aboriginal past and ever-vital present.



Retrace your steps back along Reiby Place to **Jessie Street Gardens (17)** to the left on Loftus Street.

17

## Jessie Street Gardens



Jessie Street representing Australia at the United Nations, 1945 (Photograph: National Library of Australia)

Jessie Street (1889–1970) was a pioneering feminist who helped found the United Associations of Women. She was a lifelong activist for women's and children's rights, full equality for Aboriginal people, equal pay, international peace and universal human rights. Street co-chaired the first union equal pay committee with Lucy Woodcock and represented Australia at the United Nations Conference in 1945. She is remembered with a statue in the Jessie Street Memorial Garden at Loftus Street, Circular Quay.



Walk along Loftus Street towards Circular Quay then stop at the **Bonds of Friendship (18)** sculpture, also in the Jessie Street Gardens.

18

## Bonds of Friendship

Bonds of Friendship consists of two large interlocking bronze rings and rests on a granite slab set on a low stone plinth of local sandstone. It commemorates the voyage and arrival to Australia of European settlers on the First Fleet, under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip. The Fellowship of First Fleeters proposed the establishment of a memorial for the bicentenary of the arrival of the First Fleet. The interlocking bronze rings symbolise the links between Portsmouth and Sydney. A similar sculpture can be found in Portsmouth forming the final two links of a chain that connects the 2 cities. It is estimated 189 female convicts arrived in NSW on the First Fleet. The first ashore was Elizabeth Thackeray.



Walk into the gardens from the **Bonds of Friendship (18)** sculpture and you will come to the **World War 2 Servicewomen Memorial (19)**.

19

## World War 2 Servicewomen Memorial

This sculpture is a memorial to the servicewomen of the Australian armed forces. The sculpture features a bronze uniformed woman on a sandstone plinth and bronze bas-relief representing the various armed forces. The memorial was installed in 1988 through donations from ex-servicewomen and government grants. The sculptor, Dennis Adams, served in World War 2 and undertook many other works in Sydney, including Regimental Square at Wynyard.



Walk out of the gardens back to Loftus Street and continue north. At Alfred Street turn right and continue toward Circular Quay for the final destination, **Sydney Cove / Warrane (20)**.

20

## Sydney Cove / Warrane



Aboriginal woman in a canoe (nawi) fishing with a line, c1805  
(Drawing: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Sydney Cove / Warrane is highly significant to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as a site of first contact between the Eora and the Berewalgal (meaning people from a distant place: the Europeans). Warrane and Sydney Harbour were integral to the everyday lives of the Eora people. The men speared fish from the shoreline, while the women line-fished from their 'nawis' (canoes). As main providers of food, Sydney's Aboriginal women fished and swam in Warrane and the surrounding harbour waters. They made fishing lines by twisting plant fibre, animal fur and grasses, and fished from bark canoes with fires burning to cook their catch for their children.



Your walk ends here.

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