

Thursday 9th May 2024

Rose Bay to Watsons Bay

Distance: 8-9km



1. Rose Bay

And this is where we all gathered. Indeed, we caught up with one extra, Rob Brewster, member of the RAC team and WWF, working on WWF-Australia's national effort to Regenerate Nature using rewilding strategies. In this case, working to release and monitor the platypus reintroduction into Royal National Park.

Actually, we were not all there. Poor Jane had come down with flu-like symptoms and wisely opted to stay at home.

I like to begin here, next to an important international airport. From 1938, seaplane flights to and from London began and terminated in Sydney Harbour on Rose Bay, making it Sydney's first international airport.

Mind you, it was not looking promising!



Rose Bay was named after the Right Honourable George Rose, who was joint Secretary to the British Treasury with Thomas Steele, after whom Steel(e) Point at Nielsen Park was named. The name Rose Bay was used as early as 1788 by Captain John Hunter.

We set off from here! We followed Lyne Park, took the foreshore promenade and then headed along Vickery Avenue until we reach Tingira Reserve with its shaded casuarina fringed beach. We then continued along New South Head Rd through the Rose Bay shopping centre and before taking a left turn at Worth Arcade to Perceival Park.

By then we had Joanne working overtime with her new binoculars though she was not so sure about those Australian magpies. I am not sure that she approved of me calling them “gorgeous”!

2. Hermitage Foreshore Walk

We then headed along New South Head Rd to Dumaresq Reserve before turning left into Tivoli Ave and left again into Bay View Hill Rd and following the signs to the Hermitage Foreshore Scenic Walk. Yes, there are a whole range of new signs to stop us trespassing into the good burghers' residences (though apparently some of them had trespassed into public lands!)



I should have carried the macro lens for this fungus



Convent of the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Rose Bay, New South Wales
Tucked in behind Kincoppal

In 1882, five religious members from the Society of the Sacred Heart travelled from England on the SS Orient to establish a Sacred Heart school in Sydney.

The Convent of the Sacred Heart was designed by architect John Horbury Hunt and built between 1897 and 1900 for the Society of the Sacred Heart.

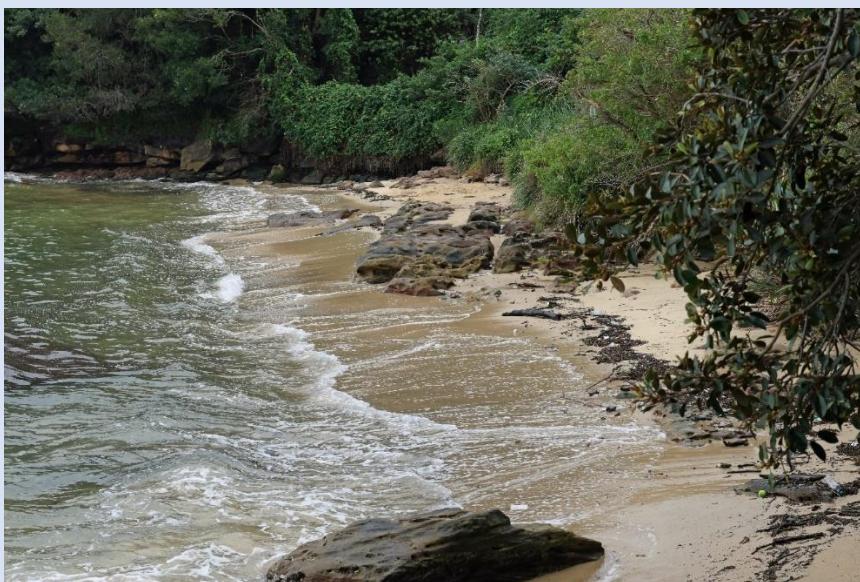
Today, it is part of the Kincoppal-Rose Bay School of the Sacred Heart.¹

And this is where the nuns are buried!



3. Secluded Beaches

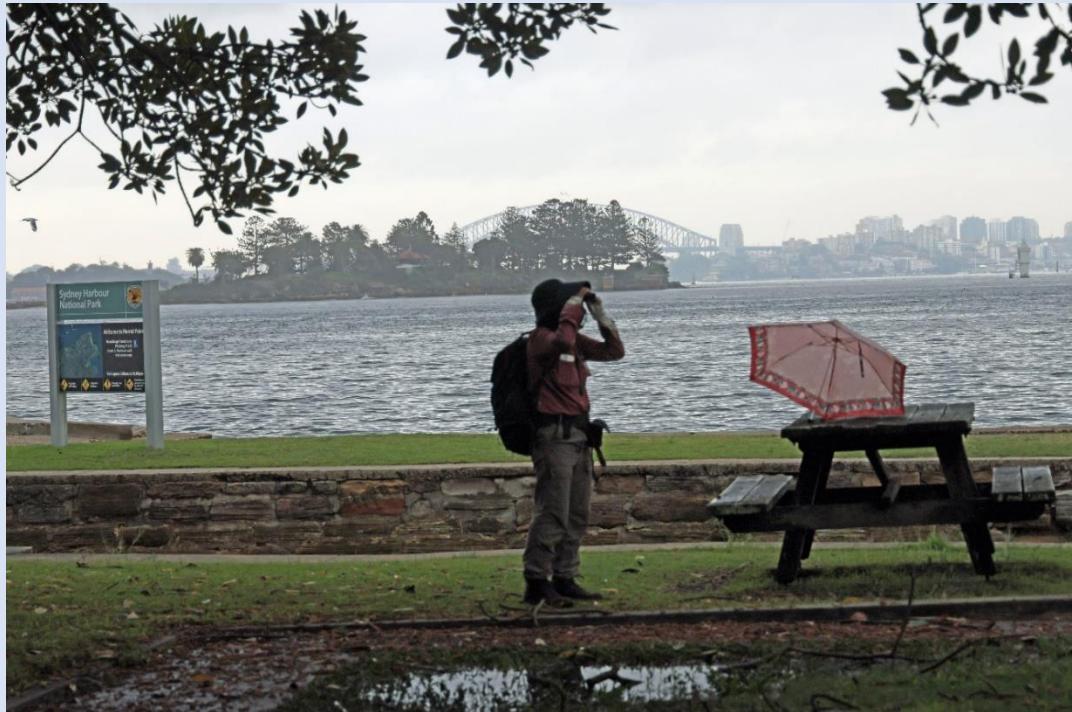
The first secluded beach along the track is Queens Beach. I don't think we'll go swimming! Mid-May is not the best time, though the water temperature might be warmer than the air temperature!



¹ The Convent of the Sacred Heart Rose Bay was founded in 1882. The Society of the Sacred Heart leased the house Claremont, later purchasing the site and building the Convent School, completed in 1888, extended in 1922 in the same style, again in 1927, 1951 and 1955. The master work of this complex is the Chapel completed in 1900 and designed by architect John Horbury Hunt. The school amalgamated with Kincoppal at Elizabeth Bay in 1971 becoming Kincoppal-Rose Bay School of the Sacred Heart.



Just as we arrived at the Hermits Beach and were giving lots of birds for Joanne to practise with her new binoculars the rains arrived. Indeed, they were heavy rains. We were blessed, however, because right there, next to us, was an overhanging cave that took us all and from the dry location we enjoyed looking at the White-faced Heron, the pair of Masked Lapwings (also known as Spurwing Plovers) and a Little Black Cormorant!



Joanne practising with her bins



Out there is rain!





4. Strickland House

Strickland House is a heritage-listed house located in the suburb of Vaucluse. Designed and built in the 1850s, the house was the home of Sydney's second mayor, John Hosking. It's only recently been added to the Sydney Harbour National Park (2018). It was designed by John Frederick Hilly and built from 1830 to 1858 by William Wentworth. It is also known as Carrara; Strickland Convalescent Home for Women; Strickland House Hospital for the Aged. The property is owned by the Government of New South Wales. It was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999 and on 21 March 1978 was listed on the (now defunct) Register of the National Estate. I have a bias towards interpreting its long use in providing health services over and above its shorter time as a home for wealthy colonials.







We are not sure what was happening here with this ferry



Steele Cottage – a one bedroom place for a couple.

5. Nielsen Park and Shark Beach

We saw both Steele Cottage and Greycliffe House here. The latter is another colonial home that ended up being involved in health deliveries for years. In 1911 it served as a neonatal hospital and mothercraft residence.

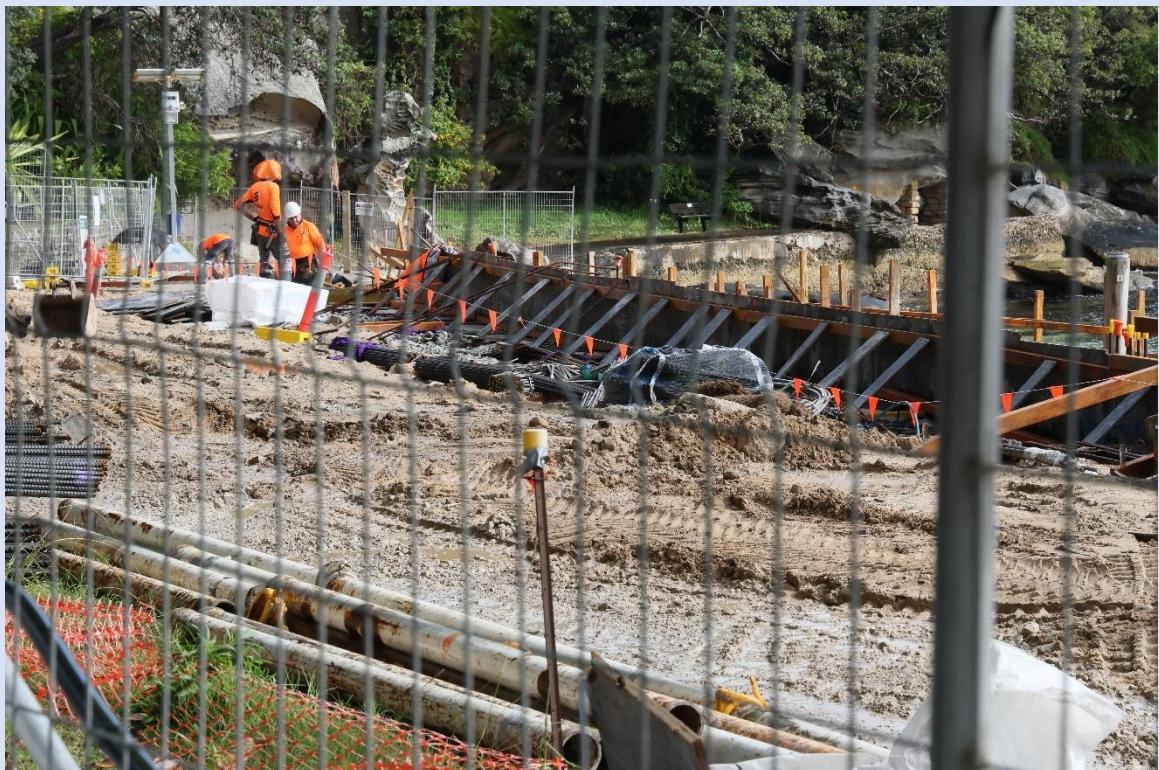


And it had a lovely table and chairs on one verandah for us while the next shower arrived!

Previously part of the Wentworth Estate, the area which became Nielsen Park was once owned by William Wentworth. It was disused since 1898 after the death of Wentworth's last surviving unmarried daughter Eliza Sophia Wentworth, at a time when little of Sydney Harbour's foreshore was accessible to the public. From the 1890s, pressure built to buy back private land, and following agitation by the Harbor Foreshores Vigilance Committee (sic), the New South Wales Government took control of 9.3 hectares (22.9 acres) of the Vaucluse estate on 6 July 1910.

The sea wall here has been under a rebuild for ages now. After several major issues, the latest report is that the contractor is nearing completion of the concrete capping beam connecting the row of piles at the front of the seawall structure. Just under 90% of the capping beam has now been poured, extending toward eastern end of Shark Beach.

Construction of the capping beam is followed by backfilling with layers of sand, ballast and shotcrete, working west-to-east along the beach. Once a section of the seawall is backfilled the contractor can form and pour the overlying concrete bleacher structure. The beach is still out of bounds! I just hope that the sea horses are going OK!



View from the ferry on return. Is this over-engineered?



The Gardiner's Cottage in Nielsen Park



6. Vaucluse House and Gardens

Now managed by Museums of History NSW on behalf of we, the citizens of NSW, it was formerly the home of statesman William Charles Wentworth and his family. It is open to visit on a Thursday if we have the energy. I have delighted in many a concert in the drawing room, the kitchens and the gardens over the years. Some with champagne!





7. Parsley Bay Reserve

From Wentworth Rd we turn right into Fitzwilliam Rd and left at the public walkway next to No 43a. We then cross over the suspension bridge and take the steps down to the reserve.



There are two popular versions of the origin of the name. One, that a hermit called 'Parsley' lived in early years in one of the caves at the head of the bay, the other is traditional and was probably used by the first exploratory parties (1788) to refer to an edible plant growing there,

closely resembling parsley, which was used as an anti-scorbutic (scurvy) by the vitamin starved First Fleeters. The Bay was set aside for public recreation use in 1907

8. Watsons Bay

And, at last, we are here! From Parsley Bay, we follow The Crescent, which leads to Watsons Bay.

From The Crescent, we turned left into Hopetoun Ave, left again into Palmerston Street, and followed the path leading to Gibsons Beach, ignoring the off-leash dogs on the leashed dog area and arrived in comfort for the 1.15pm ferry back to Circular Quay!



Strickland House from the ferry

Bird List

1. Pacific Black Duck	11. Rock Dove (e)
2. Chestnut Teal	12. Noisy Miner
3. Little Pied Cormorant	13. Superb Fairywren
4. Little Black Cormorant	14. White-browed Scrub wren
5. White-faced Heron	15. Laughing Kookaburra
6. Masked Lapwing	16. Grey Butcherbird
7. Silver Gull	17. Australian Magpie
8. Little Corella	18. Pied Currawong
9. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	19. Figbird
10. Rainbow Lorikeet	20. Common Myna (e)

Brian Everingham