



historical  
walking  
tours

CITY OF SYDNEY



# GRITTY NEWTOWN

Historical Walking Tour



Cover Image:

King Street near the corner of Missenden Road, 1950s  
(Photograph: Marrickville Library and History Services)

# NEWTOWN



Although it began as a rural outpost scattered with 'gentleman's estates', Newtown became increasingly populous with the coming of the railway in 1855. The Municipality of Newtown was proclaimed in 1862. By the 1870s, it was one of the most densely populated municipalities in NSW.

"King-street Newtown is always more or less busy, but on Saturday night it is seen at its best and brightest. Fancy a double line, more than a mile long, of brilliantly lighted shops; and 'side-walks' so inconveniently crowded, that it is often a matter of some difficulty to push one's way through the throng of people on business and on pleasure bent." (Illustrated Sydney News, 27 June 1889).

King Street still hums, and today Newtown is one of Sydney's most vibrant and gritty inner-city suburbs.



PLEASE ALLOW  
1 TO 2 HOURS FOR THIS TOUR.

This tour will guide you through the history of Newtown. There are cafés and restaurants along the way. Your walking tour starts at Newtown Bridge. Alight from the railway station on the eastern side of King Street.

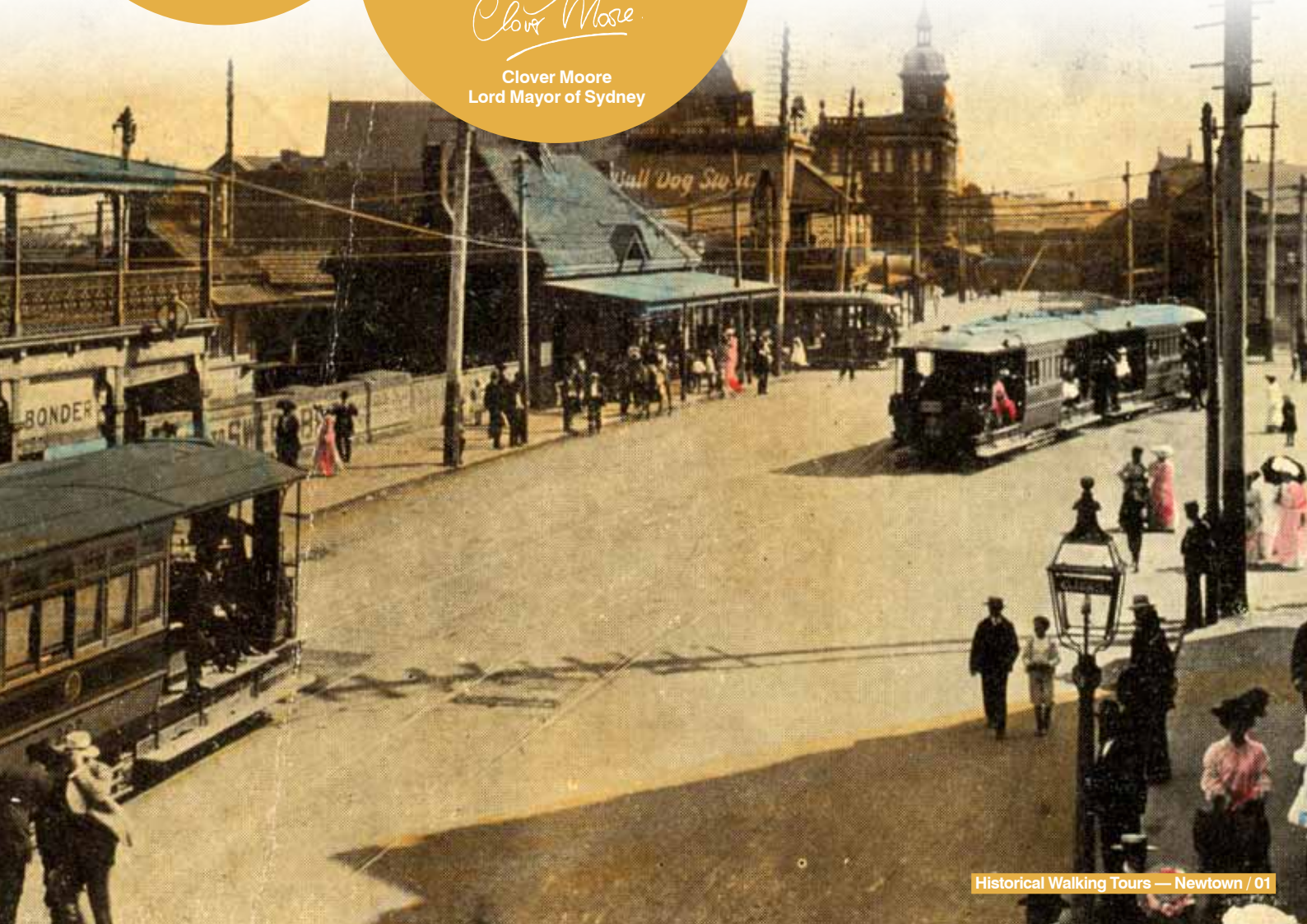
**Sydney's  
history  
is all around us.**

Our walking tours will lead you on a journey of discovery from early Aboriginal life through to contemporary Sydney.

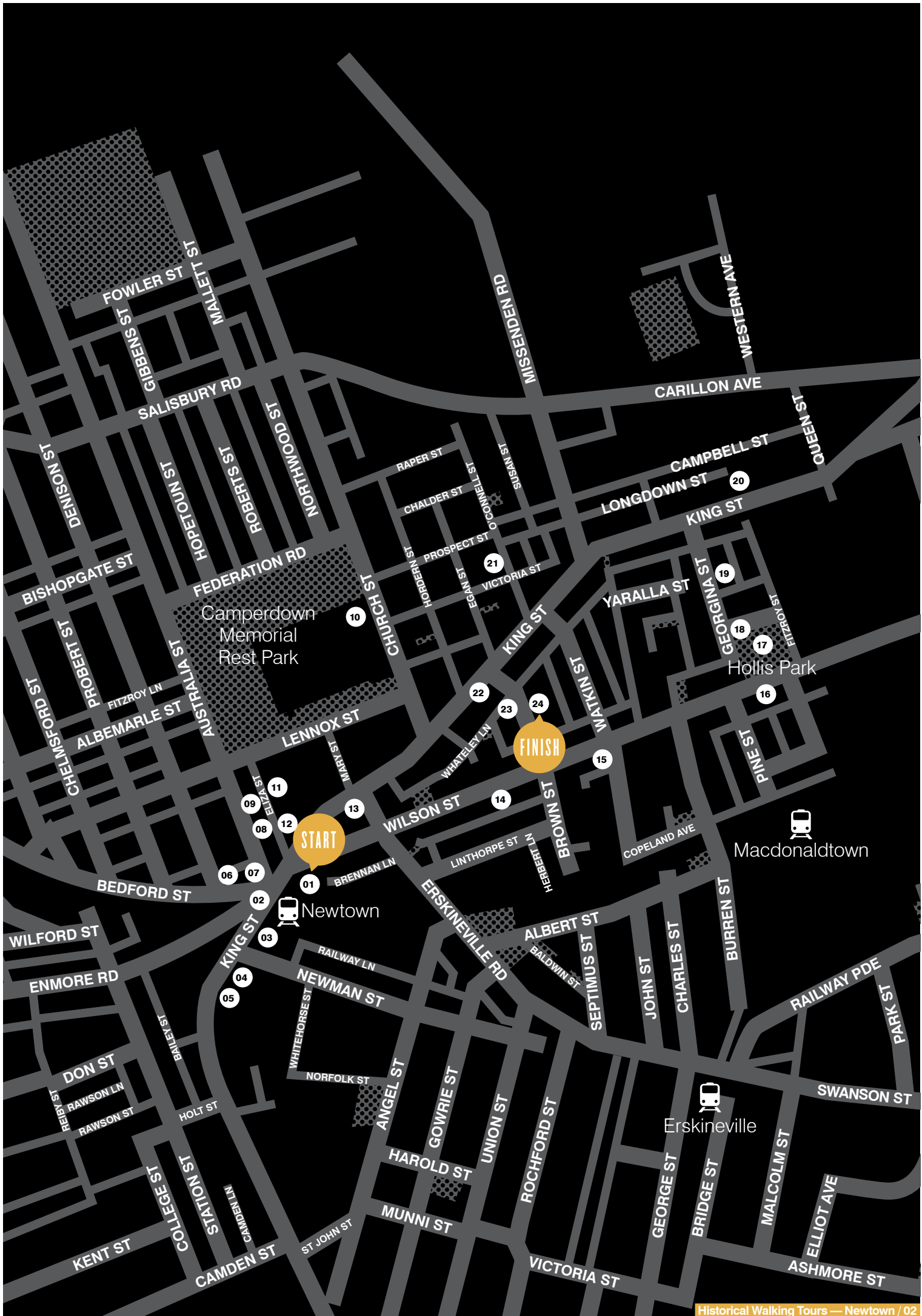
*Clover Moore*

Clover Moore  
Lord Mayor of Sydney

Crowds of 'promenaders' on Newtown Bridge, 1906  
(Image: City of Sydney Archives)







Camperdown  
Memorial  
Rest Park

Hollis Park

START

FINISH

Newtown

Macdonaldtown

Erskineville

# GRITTY NEWTOWN

Historical Walking Tour

01

## NEWTOWN RAILWAY STATION

324A KING STREET

The Great Western Railway line from Sydney to Parramatta opened in 1855 with four stops along the way, including Newtown. The original train station was near Crago Flour Mills (now the Silos Apartments), hence the street name Station Street, but was moved to its present site in 1892 when the railway line was expanded. A ticket office was built at street level on the **Newtown Bridge (02)** and platforms were accessed by steep stairs.



Inside the ticket office at Newtown Station, 1932  
(Photograph: Historic Houses Trust of NSW)

02

## NEWTOWN BRIDGE

Newtown Bridge is much more than an elevated roadway over the railway line: 'The Bridge' is Newtown's civic and cultural heart.

It was a popular open-air meeting site in the first half of the 20th century. It attracted political rallies, soapbox speakers and religious preachers, including socialists and communists, supporters of the General Strike of 1917, and the Salvation Army. The late Bob Gould, a Newtown stalwart, remembered communists addressing passers-by from soapboxes were regularly arrested in the 1950s.



Turn left and walk along the eastern side of King Street to the corner of Newman Street.

03

## SITE OF NEWTOWN MARKETS

328-342 KING STREET

There were markets on this corner from 1885. They originally occupied the former office, waiting room and stables of the Sydney Omnibus Company.

Markets were held regularly between the 1880s and the 1950s, but Friday and Saturday nights were the most popular times. Newtown's markets were crowded and noisy. Stallholders sold everything from fruit, vegetables, meat and tobacco to second-hand books, furniture and clothes.



Newtown Markets rebuilt in 1906  
(Photograph: Jubilee Souvenir of the Municipality of Newtown 1912)



The trachyte obelisk on the opposite corner of Newman Street is a war memorial and honour roll engraved with the names of World War 1 veterans from Newtown Public School, now the **Newtown High School of Performing Arts (04)**. Continue along to **St Georges Hall (05)**.

05

## ST GEORGES HALL

352 KING STREET

NSW premier Sir Henry Parkes laid the foundation stone for St Georges Hall in June 1887. It was designed by David Ross as a venue for concerts, theatre, dances and public meetings, entertaining up to 1,200 people. With its prominent position on King Street, it provided serious competition to the civic amenity of the nearby town hall.



Aldermanic reception at St Georges Hall, 1932  
(Photograph: Powerhouse Museum)



Cross King Street at the lights then turn right. Trace your steps back towards Newtown Bridge and the former City Bank building on the corner, then cross Enmore Road at the lights. To the left is **The Hub (06)**. The former **Newtown Town Hall (07)** is on the corner of Bedford and Australia streets.

# GRITTY NEWTOWN

Historical Walking Tour

06

## HUB THEATRE

7-13 BEDFORD STREET

Newtown locals may remember the Hub's spicy reputation. The former cinema started life as Clay's Bridge Theatre in 1913. Theatre impresario Harry Clay provided Newtown's only live vaudeville venue in the early 20th century. Clay's theatre was taken over by Hoyts in the 1930s and converted into a cinema. In the 1950s and '60s, it screened non-English-language films to cater to Newtown's large migrant population, and was briefly the home of the Sydney Film Festival. With the relaxation of Australia's censorship laws, The Hub became an insalubrious and infamous 'blue movie house'. It closed in the mid-1990s and has been vacant since.

07

## NEWTOWN TOWN HALL (FORMER)

1 BEDFORD STREET

The former town hall was originally Newtown's controversial first School of Arts. The building's original architect Frederick Holland was Newtown's first mayor. Holland designed the building but after concerns it was structurally unsound, rival architect John Bibb stepped in to oversee the demolition and reconstruction of the second storey. Holland became mayor in 1863 but nursed a grievance toward his fellow councillors, which tainted council meetings until he was voted out two years later.

The Municipality of Newtown was incorporated in 1862. The council leased a number of rooms within the School of Arts before purchasing the building outright for its town hall in 1868. Within the year, the building was extended and renamed Newtown Municipal Council Chambers. It was refurbished and given a new façade in the 1920s and is now leased by the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre.



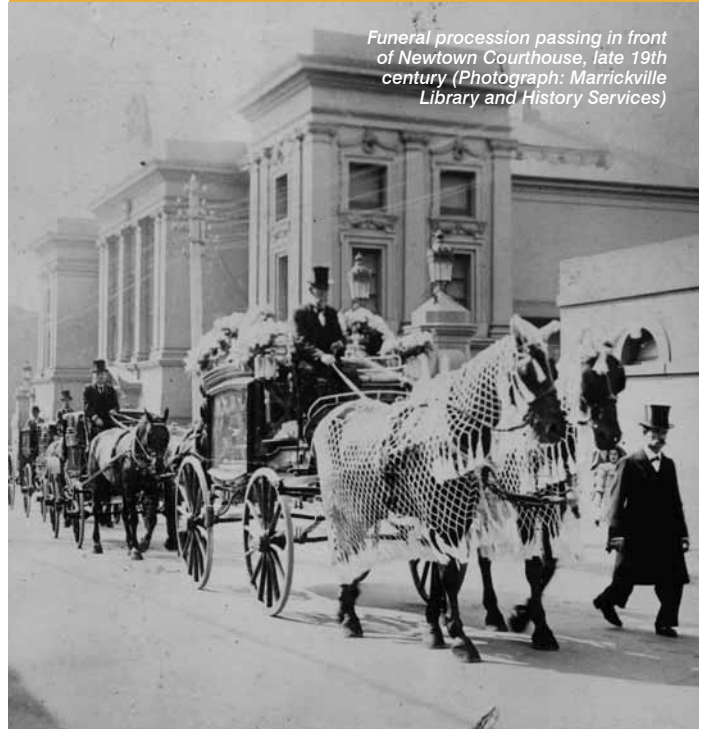
Turn left on to Australia Street. This is Newtown's civic precinct, with a **Courthouse** (08), **Police Station** and **Fire Station** (09).

08

## NEWTOWN COURTHOUSE

222 AUSTRALIA STREET

Newtown Courthouse has been in continuous use since 1885. Although the courthouse appears monumental when viewed from Australia Street, police and court officers thought it was poky and didn't want to move in. Offices were crammed underneath the courtroom because the site was small and restricted. Colonial Architect James Barnet was later censured by government for the choice of building site and for going over budget.



*Funeral procession passing in front of Newtown Courthouse, late 19th century (Photograph: Marrickville Library and History Services)*

09

## NEWTOWN FIRE STATION

214 AUSTRALIA STREET

Newtown Volunteer Fire Company was established in the early 1870s with just nine volunteers, a hand pump, a small reel of hose and a ladder. When Newtown's first fire station on Australia Street opened in June 1892, volunteer firemen were replaced by paid staff.

The existing Newtown No.5 Fire Station was designed by Spain, Cosh & Minnett in 1913.

By 1922, all the horse-drawn fire engines had been replaced with motor-driven ones, including one that could 'throw 600 gallons of water on to a fire every single minute it is working'.



Continue along Australia Street until you reach the **Courthouse Hotel**, earlier called the **Kingston Lodge Hotel**, then turn right on to **Lennox Street**. To your right is **Eliza Street**. On the left is **Camperdown Memorial Rest Park** (10), previously **Camperdown Cemetery**. **St Stephen's Church** is behind the brick wall. The entrance is on **Church Street**.



### 10 CAMPERDOWN MEMORIAL REST PARK

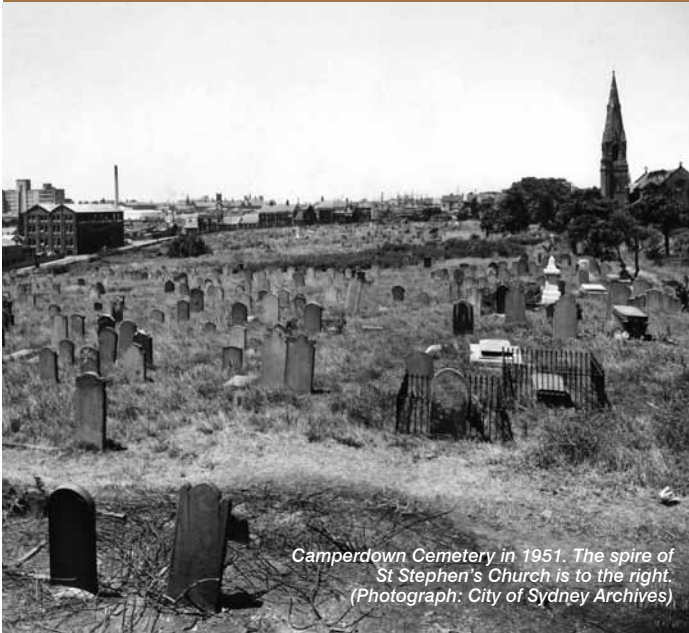
187-189 CHURCH STREET

Camperdown Cemetery was established in 1848 and was the Church of England's principal burial ground until 1867. The cemetery covered 13 acres between Lennox Street and Federation Road. Both the Cemetery Lodge and the fig tree near the entrance gates date from 1848.

Up to 18,000 people were buried during the cemetery's 18 years of operation. Many could not afford headstones so were buried in unmarked graves.

After Camperdown Cemetery closed, part of it was taken over for St Stephen's Church. Designed in the Gothic Revival architectural style by Edmund Blacket, it was officially opened in April 1874.

After complaints about its neglected state, Camperdown Cemetery was converted to a public park in 1951. Gravestones north of St Stephen's were removed and a large wall was built to enclose the church grounds and the remaining gravesites.



Camperdown Cemetery in 1951. The spire of St Stephen's Church is to the right. (Photograph: City of Sydney Archives)



Retrace your steps to Eliza Street. Follow the street along until you reach the **School of Arts (11)** and the **Zanzibar Hotel (12)**.

### 11 NEWTOWN SCHOOL OF ARTS

5 ELIZA STREET

Newtown Workman's Institute was formed in 1899, later becoming Newtown's second School of Arts. Originally housed in rooms in St Georges Hall, the institute rented a small cottage at 5 Eliza Street from 1902, which was replaced with a new building in 1916. It featured a library, lecture hall, billiards hall, and small rooms for reading, retiring, smoking, games, meeting and classrooms.

### 12 ZANZIBAR (FORMER OXFORD HOTEL)

323 KING STREET

There has been a pub on this corner since the early 1860s. Originally called the Daniel Webster Hotel, it was renamed the Oxford Hotel in 1875. It was refurbished in the art deco style in 1913. In the 1980s, the Oxford Tavern was a popular live music venue, and was open late most nights. The hotel was refurbished in 2002 with an African theme and renamed Zanzibar.



Cross King Street at the lights, turn left and continue until you reach **Newtown Post Office (13)** on the corner of Erskineville Road.



Plan and elevation drawn by architect N F Nurzey in 1913 for the Oxford Hotel (State Records of NSW)



### KING STREET

King Street is Newtown's 'spine'. The first major transport route through Newtown followed the same alignment of today's King Street. It is likely this 'bullock route' followed an Aboriginal track across the ridges to the Cooks River. Originally known as the Bullanaming Road and later as the Cooks River or Newtown Road, it was officially named King Street in 1877. Its retail strip developed from the 1880s, and soon it became one of Sydney's busiest suburban commercial centres.

### 13 NEWTOWN POST OFFICE

292 KING STREET

Designed by NSW Government Architect Walter Liberty Vernon, Newtown Post Office was officially opened in August 1893 by the governor of NSW, the Earl of Jersey. A clock was installed in 1900. Newtown Post Office had 70 staff working across post, telegraph and telephone services in 1912, 50 years after the thriving municipality was formed.



Newtown Post Office, 1890s  
(Photograph: State Records of NSW)

*Cross Erskineville Road at the lights and then turn right. Continue along and then turn left on Wilson Street. Walk along until you reach the former **Oddfellows Hall** (14).*

### 14 ODDFELLOWS HALL (FORMER)

69-71 WILSON STREET

The Loyal William Lane Lodge (No. 5) of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was established at Newtown in 1878 and their lodge on Wilson Street opened 10 years later. It was one of many friendly society lodges established in Sydney during the 19th century, providing mutual support for working men.

The hall was converted to a boxing gym by Ern McQuillan in the 1970s. Aboriginal boxing greats trained by McQuillan include Tony Mundine, father of Anthony 'The Man' Mundine, Harry Grogan, Wally Carr and Alfie Clay. Oddfellows Hall was redeveloped as residential units in the 1980s.



Ern McQuillan at his Newtown gym in 1979 (Photograph: National Library of Australia)

*Follow Wilson Street until you reach **Hollis Park** (17). Along the way, look out for the site of Henry Henninges bakery on the corner of **Watkin Street** (15). The Stucco housing cooperative is opposite the park at 197-207 **Wilson Street** (16).*

### 17 HOLLIS PARK

Hollis Park was Newtown's first public park, established in 1913. The park was named for English-born Robert Hollis, engine driver, unionist and parliamentarian. Hollis lived in Newtown from 1884, when he migrated to Australia. He was a foundation member of the Newtown Labor League in 1891 and MLA for Newtown in 1901-17. He was also a founder of the Newtown Literary and Debating Society and served as a director of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

*Walk through the park to the corner of Warren Ball Avenue and Georgina Street, where there is a granite memorial to the 'Prince of Charity Organisers' **Mr Warren Ball JP** (18). Georgina Street is filled with grand terrace houses built between 1885 and 1890. This tree-lined street is Newtown's most sought-after address. The **synagogue** (19) is on the corner of Hollis Lane.*

### 19 NEWTOWN SYNAGOGUE

20 GEORGINA STREET

Newtown had a sizable Jewish population from the 1880s. Organised Jewish life began at this time. Land was acquired on Georgina Street for a purpose-built synagogue in 1912, which was officially opened with a consecration ceremony in September 1919. Newtown was the second suburban Jewish congregation in Sydney to build its own synagogue.

*Follow Georgina Street to King Street. Cross King Street at the lights, then turn right and walk towards the city until you reach the **Trocadero** (20)*

### 20 TROCADERO

69-77 KING STREET

Roller skating was a popular pastime in the late 19th century. One of the most ornate rinks in Sydney was Newtown's 'Trocadero and Academie de Musique', opened in 1889. The Trocadero boasted hairdressing saloons for men and women, a billiards room with two tables, a French café, and oyster saloons. The roller-skating rink was in the main hall. It had a fountain as its centrepiece, and had a corrugated iron clerestory roof that could be opened to the elements.

*Retrace your steps along King Street, past the Marlborough Hotel, until O'Connell Street. Turn right. The former **NSW Railway and Tramway Recreation Club** (21) is on the corner of Victoria Street.*



### 21 NSW RAILWAY & TRAMWAY RECREATION CLUB (FORMER)

16-18 O'CONNELL STREET

The NSW Railway and Tramway Recreation Club was built in 1911. It had recreational facilities including a gymnasium, billiards room and a library, as well as a miniature rifle range on the roof. By 1949, the building was converted into a factory for the Indiana Hosiery Company, and was later home to Champion Textiles. The building is now converted into apartments.

*If you have time, wander along Chalder, Prospect and Hordern streets, which have a number of early timber houses. Otherwise, retrace your steps to King Street. Turn right and then cross at the second set of lights. Look out for the art deco façade of the **Burland Hall** opposite while you wait at the lights (22).*

### 22 BURLAND HALL (FORMER)

222 KING STREET

Although the former Burlington Hall has an art deco façade, it was originally built in 1888 as Her Majesty's Skating Rink. The ice rink was famed for its skating surface 'as smooth as polished glass'. In summer, it was converted into 'monster' swimming baths. The grand pleasure palace lasted less than a decade, and became part of Marcus Clark's department store emporium at 216-226 King Street. It later became a cinema and received an art deco facelift in the 1930s.

*After crossing King Street, turn into Brown Street. On the corner of Brown Lane is a former warehouse (23) that was once part of Marcus Clark's department store emporium.*



*Newtown Railway and Tramway Institute's third annual road race in August 1926 (Photograph: courtesy Clyde Ellem, City of Sydney Archives)*

### 23 MARCUS CLARK & CO. LTD

1-1A BROWN STREET  
(ALSO 216-226 KING STREET AND 2-14 BROWN STREET)

In 1883, Henry Marcus Clark established his drapery store on King Street on the site of Dendy Cinemas. It expanded to become one of Sydney's largest department stores by the early 20th century. Marcus Clark's 'Millinery, Clothing, Boot & Fancy Goods Warehouse' moved to its new location further north along King Street on the corner of Brown Street in the 1890s. The emporium covered 10 acres; only this modest warehouse survives.



*Marcus Clark & Co emporium on the corner of King and Brown streets (Image: City of Sydney Archives / Salvation Army Archives)*

*Diagonally opposite is the **Newtown Library** (24). Your tour ends here.*

### 24 NEWTOWN LIBRARY

8-10 BROWN STREET

The Newtown Corps of the Salvation Army was formed in April 1883 and their barracks on Brown Street were built a year later. The building was renovated in 1922 and renamed the Newtown Citadel. It has been home to Newtown Library since 1995.



*The Salvation Army's brass band played at the Newtown Bridge every week. (Photograph: Salvation Army Archives)*





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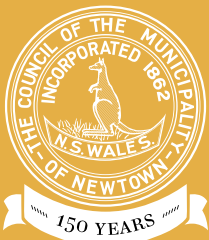
More information can be found at the City's website:

[www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history)

or call the City of Sydney on **9265 9333**

*This story is one of many layers*

[www.dictionaryofsydney.org](http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org)



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After reading, pass it on to  
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useful or recycle it.



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[council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

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**STOP!**

ON THE FOOTPATH

**LOOK!**

RIGHT, LEFT AND RIGHT AGAIN

**LISTEN!**

FOR ANY OTHER TRAFFIC  
INCLUDING PUSH BIKES

**THINK!**

IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO CROSS?

**CROSS!**

WITH CARE AND KEEP ON  
LOOKING FOR OTHER VEHICLES

This brochure was prepared by the  
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