

Cruise Cowans Creek

Jerusalem Bay – the head of the bay dries out to reveal the remains of a boatshed built by George Rhodes when he settled here with his family in 1895. He built a track up to what is now Cowan Station. In 1933 for 12 pounds each, he bought the hulls the Swan and Parramatta, the first Australian warships. They were towed to the head of the bay and grounded for the use of fishing parties. NP complained and they were towed away and later used for construction work on Milsons Island where they were later sunk. It is also a great hairtail fishing area and it was here in 1951 that the largest hairtail recorded was caught...2.34mtrs long.

Cottage Point – was settled around 1920's and what was one of the original homesteads is now KMYC Clubhouse. When it was built there were no roads so all materials were bought in by barge. At that time there was no water, power or sewage to Cottage Point. The road from Terrey Hills was constructed by members of KMYC and the CP village then grew.

Looking Grass Rock – named as the morning sun shines brightly in midsummer. Local aborigines believed that if the rock ever became submerged then it would be a sign that the Europeans would depart.

Smiths Creek – many aborigine cave sites and a great anchorage at the end for boats....also a small creek runs into the foothills of Terrey Hills which is a favourite among kayakers in this area.

Waratah Bay – site of one of the earliest buildings in Cowan having been built by Edward Windybank in about 1890. He lived here with his family in this very lonely and isolated spot. The boatshed burnt down in 1972 but the foundations remain. The walk up the track he created to Berowra Station is a great hike. He was a great enthusiast for the bush and a smart businessman and saw the potential for Cowan to be a destination for holidaymakers so he built a fleet of 60 row boats which he hired out. He is also believed to be the first person in NSW to make moored houseboats available for hire. They were named Slumberland and Loveland and could sleep 12 people and were equipped with pianos and wooden stoves. Rent for a week was 3 pounds...they were moored along the creek, hence the name Houseboat Bay. The wreck in Waratah Bay, thought for many years to be the paddle steamer General Gordon has proven to be incorrect as measurements prove it to be a coastal paddle steamer. Edwards descendants operated the Windybanks Bait Service from nearby Mt Colah. There is a great walk from here to Apple Tree Bay then up to Mt Ku-ring-gai Station.

Apple Tree Bay – was named during a survey in 1832 which used a native smooth barked apple tree growing on top of the headland as a survey marker. As you approach the bay on the starboard side are the remains of the Woodnutts Boatshed which was built around 1921 to hire out boats to fisherman and provide refreshments to hikers. All that remains today is a stone wall and the steel tracks of the slipway.

Bobbin Head – this was the base for Halvorsen Boats prior to the marina being upgraded and now known as Empire Marina. The fleet of hire cruisers was one of the first to operate on the Hawkesbury. In the 1960's, there was a fleet of 62 vessels and they introduced many people to boating and many of these vessels are still in service today....with a few at KMYC. A track behind the marina leads to the remains of Duffys Wharf which was an early site for timber cutting ..mainly blue gum and black butt. The Bobbin Head Inn was built in 1937. There have been numerous upgrades to the area including some great walks and the boardwalk thru the mangroves and across Cockle Creek and joins the lower part of the Gibberagong track.

General Overview – For thousands of years this region was part of the territory of the Eora and Guringai people and many of their works of rock art are preserved in the NP. The engravings were made by the Aboriginal Australians who have lived in the Sydney region from about 30,000 years ago until the present day. Radiocarbon dating suggests human activity first started to occur in the Sydney area from around 30,735 years ago. However, numerous Aboriginal stone tools were found in Western Sydney's gravel sediments that were dated from 45,000 to 50,000 years BP, which would indicate that there was human settlement in Sydney earlier than thought. The engravings cannot be dated straightforwardly with contemporary archaeological methods, necessitating the use of indirect dating. The Sydney engravings are of a style known as "simple figurative", which formulaic archaeology dates to around 3,000 BC and 4,000 BC, which is contemporaneous to the neolithic period in Eurasia. Other engravings show European sailing ships, and so those cannot be more than about 200 years old. It is likely that some of the freshest engravings represent the later part of that time range, whilst the most worn represent the earliest part. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that the engravings were sometimes "re-grooved" during ceremonies

Along the shores of the creek there are a number of middens indicating aboriginal settlements.it is believed they are 200-5000 years old. Some of the shells have been carbon dated as 3000 years old. Aboriginal tours of the area are conducted by Guringai Aboriginal Tours and include Basin Track, engraving site and Red Hands Cave - [.guringaitours.com.au](http://guringaitours.com.au).

One of the most bizarre plans for the area was in 1899. It was to establish the national capital, to be called Pacivica on the headland between Smiths Creek and Cowan Creek. The buildings were to be modelled on Windsor Castle, Tower of London etc and access was to be via a suspension bridge near Bobbin Head. Thankfully it never happened and we can all now enjoy the NP and its spectacular bushlands. Also during the depression, many of the caves in the NP were used as housing shelter by the homeless