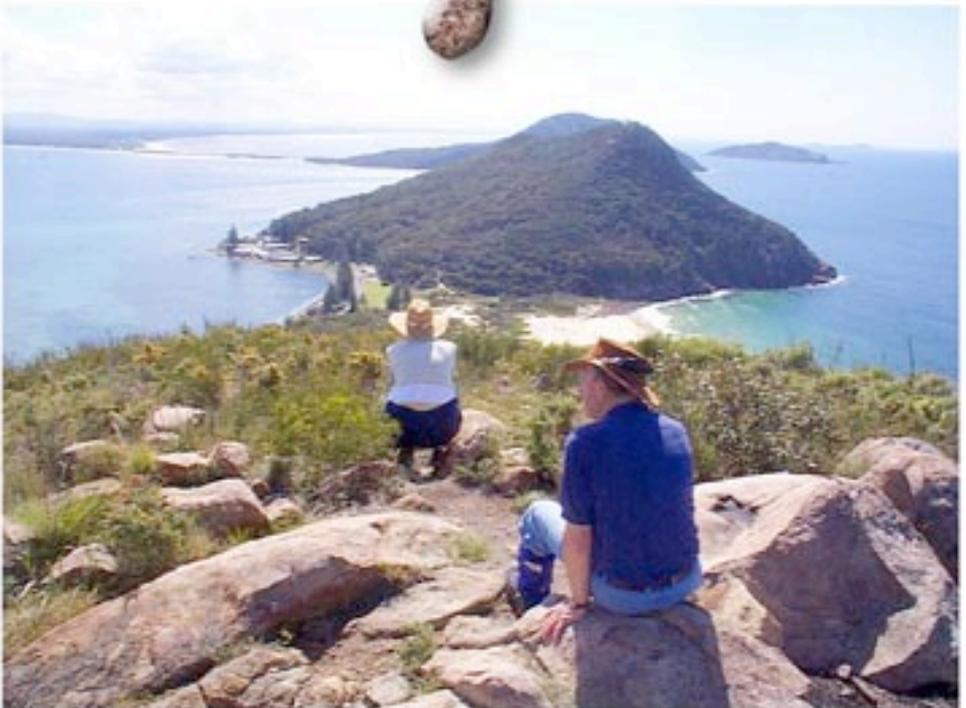
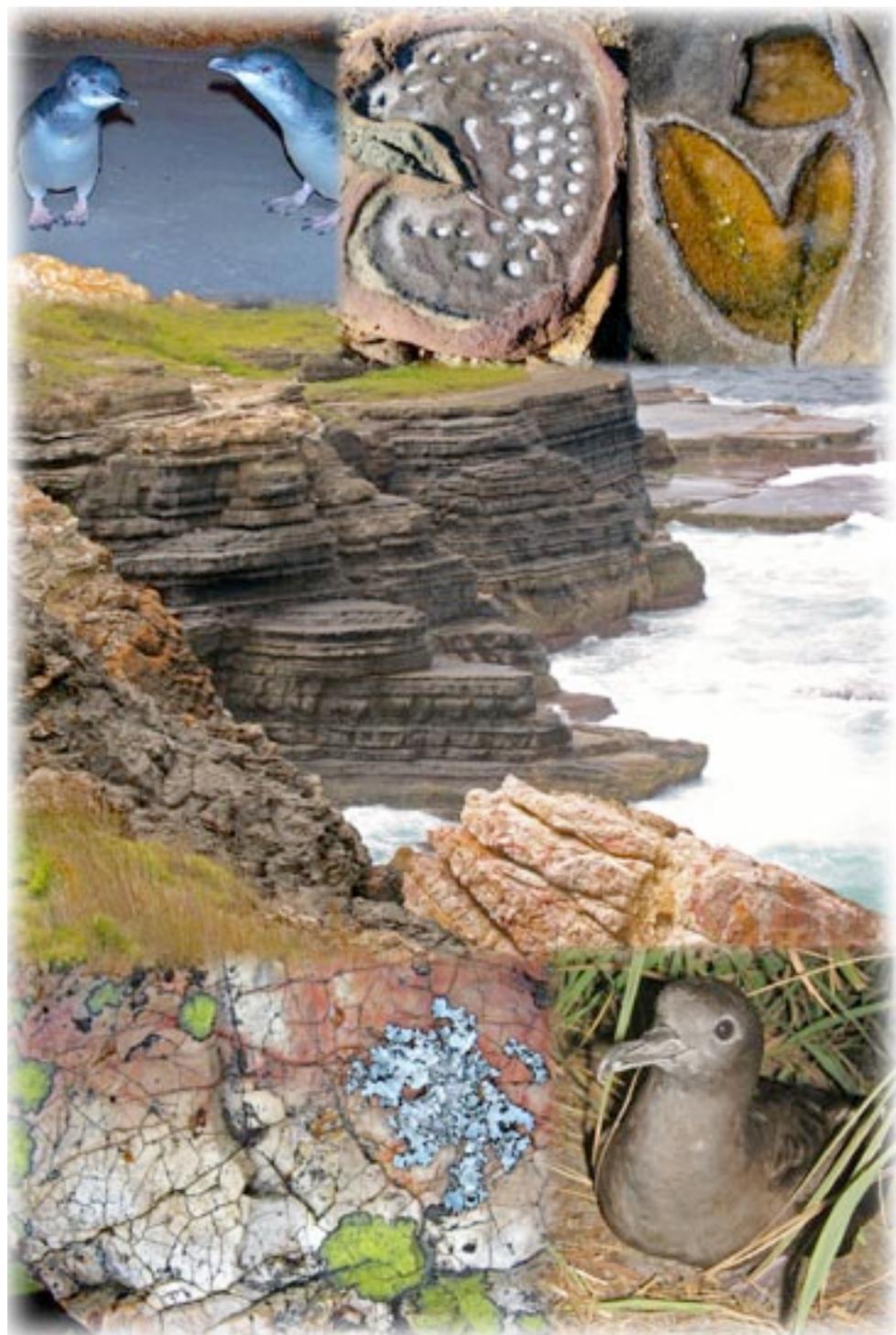


BUSHWALKS

around
PORT STEPHENS



Michael Smith





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Recommendations.

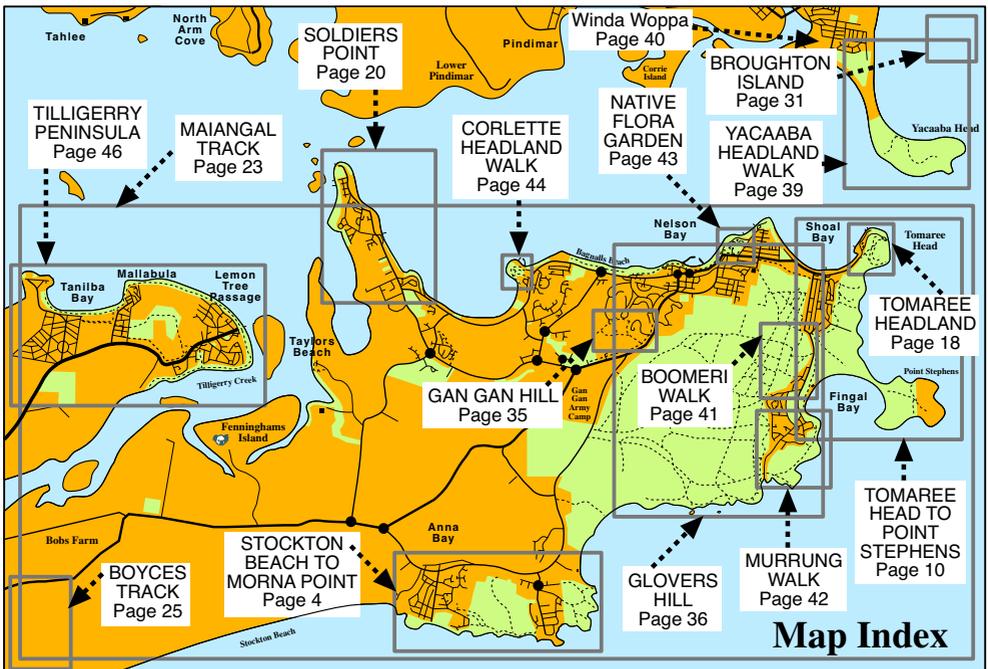
Numbers refer to the walk number.

Easy walks: 5 6 20 26 29 30 35.

Rugged wild walks: 4 11 15 16 17 18 19 28.

The best: 1 7 8 10 12 16 17 18 19 20 27 35.

The photos on the inside cover, opposite, were taken on Stockton Beach. Tank traps and sand dunes. About once a year the beach is covered in foam. Bitou Bush, holding up the eroding sand.



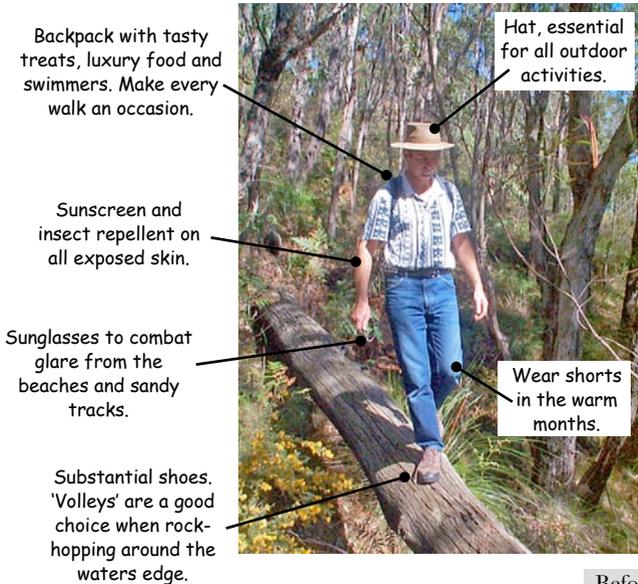
BUSHWALKS AROUND PORT STEPHENS

Port Stephens is blessed with many interesting landscapes, through which pass a number of excellent walking tracks.

Enjoy the superb views from the tops of Gan Gan Hill, Tomaree Peak, Stephens Peak and Yacaaba. There are walks around the estuary of Port Stephens, freshwater and tidal swamps, cliff tops, forests, heathlands and beaches.

The Tomaree Peninsula has about 650 plant species, 230 bird species, 48 mammal species and 38 reptile species so far recorded. By visiting a few habitats over 3 hours you should find about 30 wildflower species in bloom (40 in the spring) or if you are interested in bird spotting you should see at least 25 species in that time.

- * The tracks are generally dry and sandy, wear shoes that will not collect and hold sand.
- * Do not go into the bush during a Total Fire Ban.
- * Most walks are short and there is no need to take anything apart from this guide. If you must take something choose from the following in order of importance, water, insect repellent, raincoat, warm clothes and a camera.
- * A walking rate of 4km per hour on the flat, and 2km per hour on the slopes can be expected.



Dressed for the toughest walk in this book, Kurrara Hill. If you feel confident to walk off-track choose to do it in the cool months. You will need tough clothing, at least from the waist down, to protect yourself from the scratchy scrub and spiky hakeas. This photo was taken on the slopes of Glovers South Hill.

Before heading out read the safety suggestions on pages 47 to 48.

- First edition 1993 two thousand copies.
- Second edition 1995 two thousand copies.
- Third edition 1997 five hundred copies.
- Fourth edition 1998, seven hundred and fifty copies.
- Fifth edition 1999 three thousand copies.
- Sixth edition 2004 two thousand copies.
- Seventh edition 2008 five thousand copies.

Copies of this book are available from the Port Stephens Visitor Information Centre Victoria Pde. Nelson Bay 2315
Ph. 1800 808 900
Fax. (02) 4984 1855

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email info@portstephens.org.au
www.portstephens.org.au

DAY WALK GRADINGS

Grade 1 (Easy). Opportunity for a large number of walkers, including those with reduced walking ability to walk on well marked and even tracks. Tracks are man made and may have a few steps. Should not be steep. Suitable for beginners. Distance should not exceed about 10km.

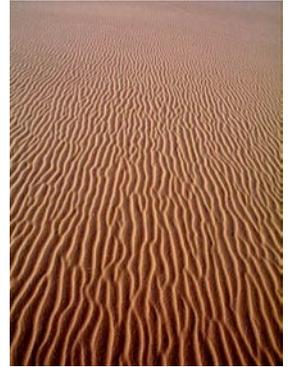
Grade 2 (Easy-medium). Easy walk, mostly on tracks of low gradient. Opportunity to walk easily in natural environments on well marked tracks. Tracks should not be steep. Distance should not exceed about 15km. Suitable for beginners.

Grade 3 (Medium). Medium walk with some hilly sections &/or rougher terrain. Opportunity to walk on defined & distinct tracks with some steep sections requiring a moderate level of fitness. Suitable for beginners. Distance should not exceed about 20 km.

Grade 4 (Medium-Hard). Steeper, rougher terrain & may have off-track sections (no more than one quarter of the walk), or a longer distance track walk. Opportunity to explore and discover relatively undisturbed natural environments mostly along defined & distinct tracks. Tracks can be steep. There may be short sections of rock scrambling involved. Leaders should have map reading abilities and/or ability to use a compass. Distance depending on circumstances. Not suitable for most beginners.

Grade 5 (Hard). Off-track or difficult terrain. Opportunity for walkers with advanced outdoor knowledge and skills to find their own way along often indistinct tracks or off-track in remote locations. May include steep sections of unmodified surfaces. There may be rock scrambling, creek walking & crossing involved. Distance should not exceed 30 km, but may be short & difficult. Not suitable for beginners.

Grade 6 (Very hard). Strenuous off-track walk or very long distance. Opportunity for highly experienced walkers to explore remote and challenging natural areas without reliance on managed tracks. Terrain may be steep, uneven and no track. There may be rock scrambling, creek walking & crossing involved. Distance covered is unlimited, but may be short & difficult. Only for experienced walkers and not suitable for beginners.



Sand, Stockton Beach



Professional fishermen on Shoal Bay Beach



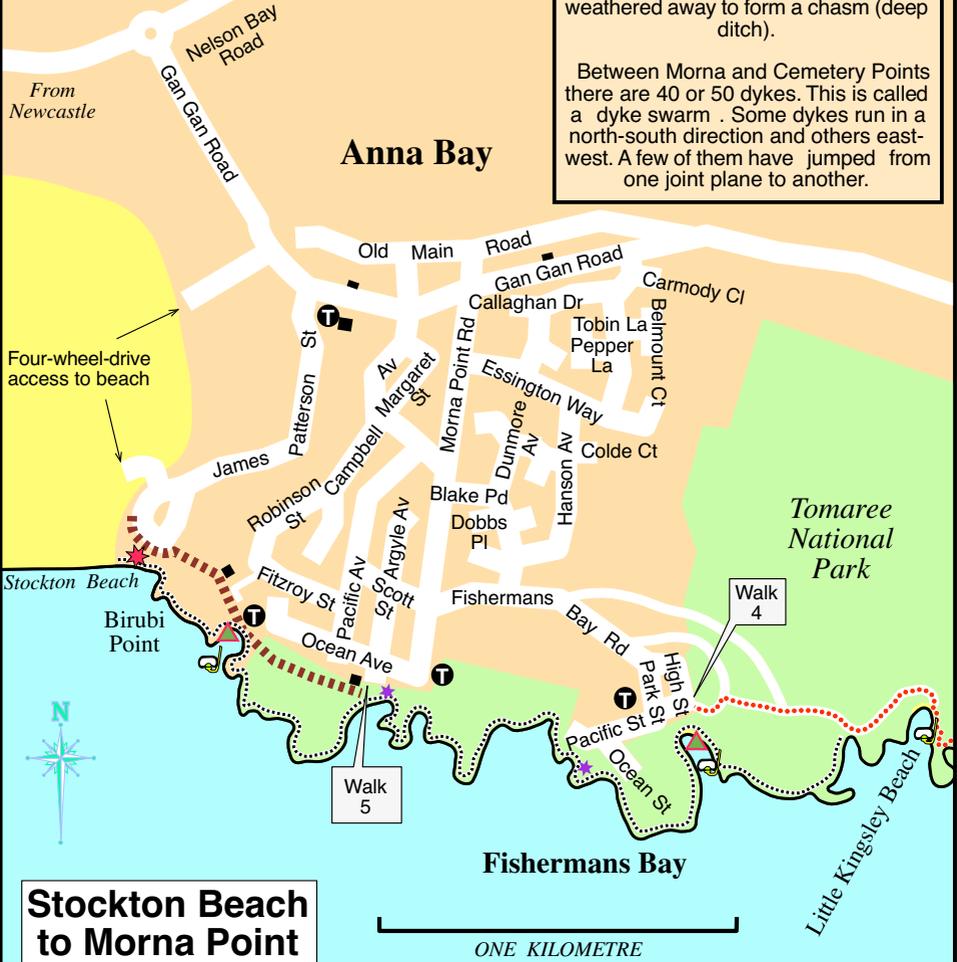
Fingal Spit, closed



GEOLOGY OF MORNA POINT

At **Morna Point** on the southern headland of One Mile Beach there is a 100m thick flow of rhyolite (phenocrysts of quartz, orthoclase and plagioclase). Erosion along joint planes has led to the formation of small stacks (pillars). Here the rhyolite has been intruded along the joint planes by fine grained dolerite dykes of Tertiary age (40 million years ago). These dykes vary from a few centimetres to 5 metres in width. In some places the dykes have been weathered away to form a chasm (deep ditch).

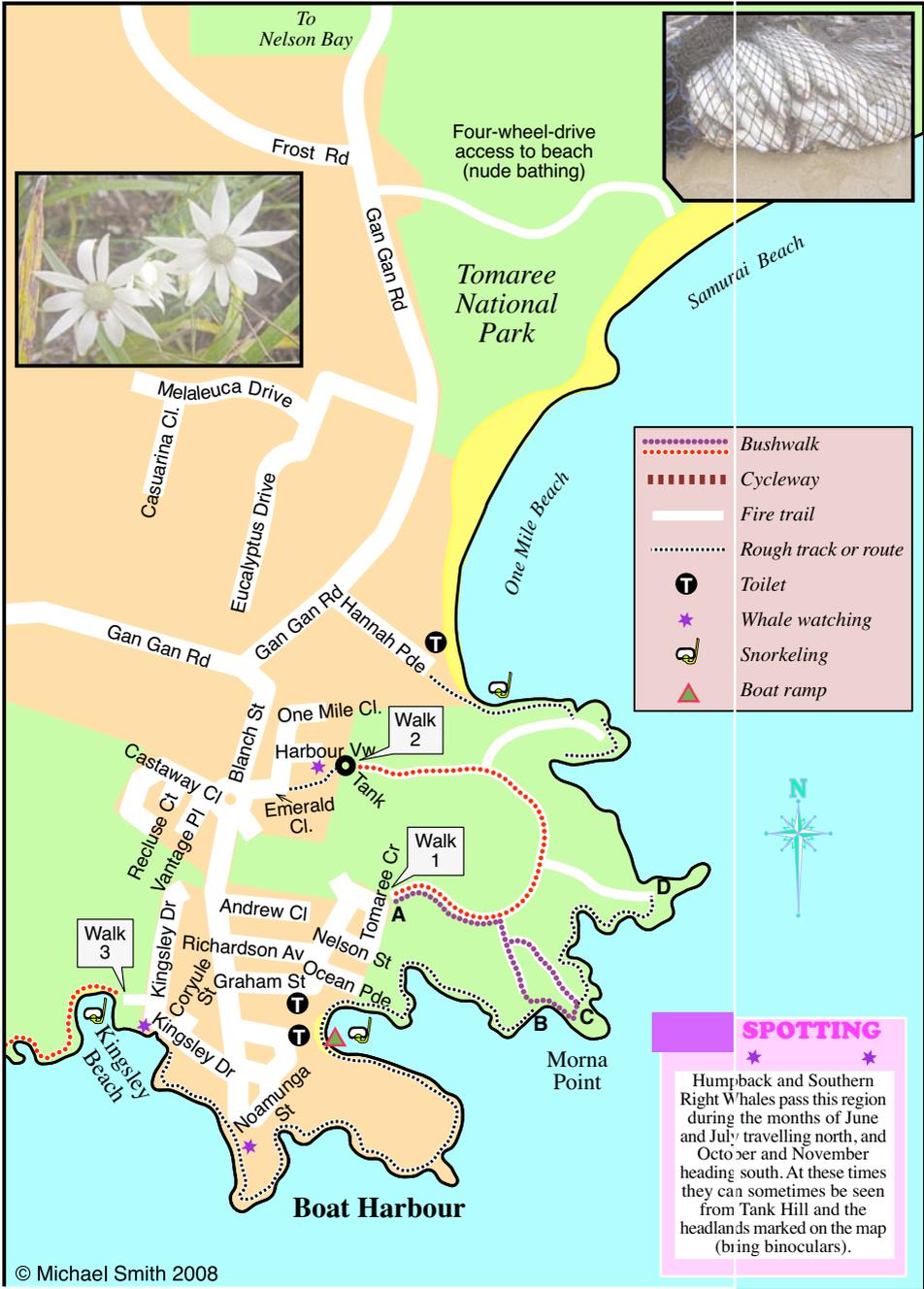
Between Morna and Cemetery Points there are 40 or 50 dykes. This is called a **dyke swarm**. Some dykes run in a north-south direction and others east-west. A few of them have jumped from one joint plane to another.



Stockton Beach to Morna Point

© Michael Smith 2008

Join map on opposite page



Morna Point Walk

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes.

Grade 3: Easy walking on fire trails with some rock hopping around the water's edge. 2km.

Map: Stockton Beach to Morna Point, page 5.

Features: Superb display of wildflowers, coastal views and lots of sea dykes.

Directions: Commence the walk from the NP&WS compound at the intersection of Tomaree Cr. and Boat Harbour Rd. Boat Harbour (point **A** on the map). A fire trail leads you to an intersection, keep right and follow the track downhill to the water's edge at **B**. From here follow the rocks around to **C**, there is no track along this section. The best dykes and sea caves occur in this area. If you have had enough, an easy fire trail leads you back to the start. For more wonderful coastal adventures continue on around the rocks to **D**, (no track). The next section of coast is considered impassable so from here follow the fire trail back to the start. This is the best bushwalk in the area.

Some of the wild coastline between Kingsley and Little Kingsley beaches



Salmon fishing on Stockton Beach

Tank Hill

Time: 45 minutes.

Grade 2: Easy walking on fire trails, some sandy hills. 1km, not including side trips.

Map: Stockton Beach to Morna Point, page 5.

Features: Wildflowers and coastal views. Dykes and rocky headlands on the side tracks.

Directions: Commence the walk from the NP&WS compound at the intersection of Tomaree Cr. and Boat Harbour Rd. Boat Harbour (point **A** on the map). Follow the headland around to the water reservoir tank on the top of the hill. From here you can wander through the residential estate, on roads, back to the start. It is more enjoyable to retrace your steps back along the fire trail, taking one or more side trips down to the water's edge. The numerous dykes at **C** are particularly worth the effort.



Vanilla Plant

3

Kingsley to Little Kingsley

Time: 1 hour.

Grade 3: Moderately difficult walking over rocks and through scrub. No tracks, 1.5km return.

Map: Stockton Beach to Morna Point, pages 4-5.

Features: Rocky bays, coastal scenery and two swimming beaches (not patrolled).

Directions: Commence the walk from the car park on Kingsley Drive just before the turnoff to Kingsley Beach. (The isolated car park at Kingsley Beach is not always a safe place to leave your car).

Descend to Kingsley Beach and cross the sand to the rocks at the western end of the beach. Follow the rocky coastline around to Little Kingsley Beach. At times it is necessary to pass through some short sections of thick scrub. Little Kingsley is a small, attractive, isolated beach. Neither it nor Kingsley Beach are patrolled, so you swim at your own risk. Return along the same route.

4

Fishermans Bay to Little Kingsley Beach

Time: 1 hour return.

Grade 2: Easy walking on a sandy fire trail. One short rocky hill to climb. 1.8km return.

Map: Stockton Beach to Morna Point, page 4.

Features: Angophora forest, easy access to the water, swimming, and our most picturesque isolated beach.

Directions: A fire trail heads east from the intersection of High and Pacific Streets, Fishermans Bay. Follow this trail to Little Kingsley Beach. Half way along this route the track meets the coastline, giving the walker a chance to explore the rock pools and bays.



Little Kingsley Beach

Once at Little Kingsley Beach it is an option to continue to Kingsley Beach (an extra 30 min.). Either way, return back along the same route.

5

Anna Bay

Time: 20 - 90 min.

Grade 1-3: Easy walking on the cycleway, rock hopping around water's edge, 2 - 6km.

Map: Stockton Beach to Morna Point, page 4.

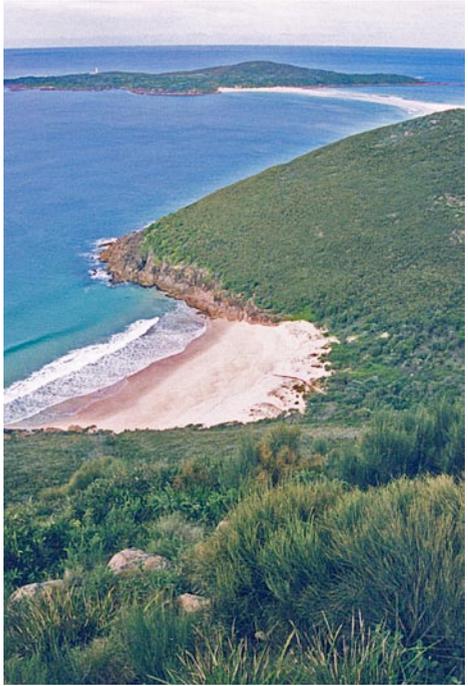
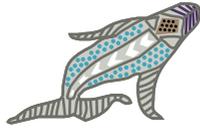
Features: Aboriginal shell middens, swimming, views over Stockton Beach, rugged rocky bays, dykes and whales in season.

Directions: A good place to start is at the historic cemetery at the end of the cycleway in Argyle Avenue, Anna Bay. One kilometre of concrete pathway leads you past Shelly Beach and the fenced off shell midden in Fitzroy Street. The cycleway ends near the car park overlooking Stockton Beach. The view from this headland, Birubi Point, over the 32km of beach with sand hills behind, is one of the great sights of the Tomaree Peninsula. Walk down to the beach and return along the sand and rocks to the point of commencement.

If your appetite for adventure still burns, then consider a rock hop to Fishermans Bay

and return. Along the way there are plenty of interesting bays and a few dykes and chasms to explore. Just west of Pacific Street is one of the least known of our rocky peculiarities. Locally known as “The Blowhole”, it is not a true blowhole but a group of pillars and chasms that really fire in a big storm.

The two best whale watching spots are in this area, Birubi Point at Anna Bay and Pacific Street, Fishermans Bay.



Wreck Beach as seen from Stephens Peak.



Fringed Violet, (Common fringe lily), *Thysanotus tuberosus*, an erect herb with a dazzling pink, fringed flower. A violet only in color, it is a member of the lily family.

Mountain Devil, *Lambertia formosa*. The name of this plant comes from the shape of the woody seed case. When dried and split the seed case has a beak and two horns giving the illusion of a devil.



The plant is widespread and dozens of them will be passed on a walk up Stephens Peak. Flowering occurs generally in the warmest half of the year.



Christmas Bell, *Blandfordia grandiflora*.

This plant thrives in swamps and wet areas. The bells should be in bloom around the base of Stephens Peak by December. They are locally threatened as a species because of illegal picking and “development” of the land that they need to grow on.

6

Torpedo Tubes

Time: 45 minutes return.

Grade 1: Paved, level road all the way. Can be exposed in a strong westerly wind. 1.8km return.

Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

Features: A stroll through Tomaree Lodge, historic gun emplacements and torpedo tubes. Dolphins, fairy penguins, sea birds and great views over Port Stephens. Suitable for wheelchairs. A superb walk on bitumen with excellent views and a dash of history.

Directions: Commence at the Zenith Beach Car Park, Shoal Bay. Follow the lower road around the water's edge. Disregard the "No entry" signs, pedestrian access is allowed.

The gate has a wheelchair bypass. The road leads past Tomaree Lodge, the jetty, Fisheries Research Station and ends at the site of the torpedo tubes.

The stone jetty was a platform that supported two torpedo tubes in 1942. They were designed to sink any enemy shipping that managed to get past the guns on the headland. Eighty metres to the north-east are the remains of one of the two "three pounder" gun emplacements. Details of this area's military history can be found in a book, *The Guns of Tomaree* by Michael Smith and Graeme Steinbeck.

7

Stephens Peak

Time: 1 hour return.

Grade 3: Steep fire trail at first. Last section is a steep climb on a rocky, washed out track through thick bush (not signposted). 1 km return.

Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

Features: Lots of wildflowers, glorious views over Point Stephens and Shoal Bay. Chance sightings of sharks, dolphins, whales and fairy penguins off the beaches.

Directions: Commence at the highest point in Joleen Crescent, Shoal Bay. Follow the fire trail that heads off to your right, up the hill. This fire trail levels off and begins to descend the lower slopes of Stephens Peak. At this point a rough track heads off up to the summit of Stephens Peak. The turn off is not sign posted. On the way up you will pass the "Two and a Half Sisters". The vegetation is low and heath-like allowing views all the way to the top. The panorama from Stephens Peak is the best to be had in the area.

Return via the same route or add a side trip to Zenith or Wreck Beach.

8

Stephens Peak / 2

Time: 1 hour return.

Grade 3: Rocky, sandy fire trail at first. The last section is a steep climb on a rocky, washed out track through thick bush, 1 km return.

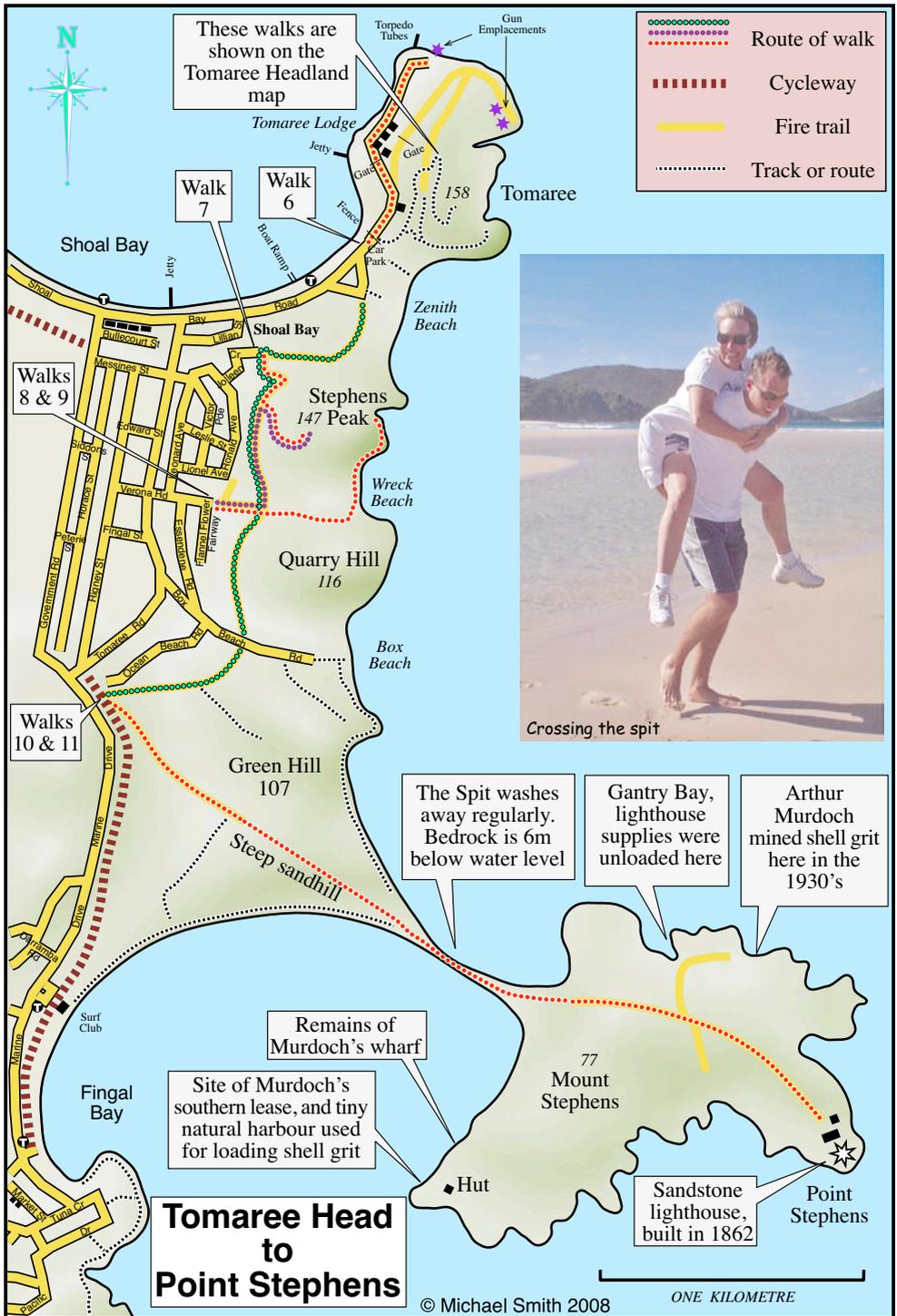
Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

Features: Lots of wildflowers, glorious views over Point Stephens and Shoal Bay. Chance sightings of sharks, dolphins, whales and fairy penguins off the beaches. The second best walk in the area (after Morna Point).

Directions: Commence at the eastern end of either Verona Rd. or Lionel Ave. Shoal Bay. Follow the fire trail that heads towards Wreck Beach. Part way to the beach another fire trail branches off to the left, take it, Stephens Peak should be looming up ahead of you. Before this fire trail begins to descend, turn off on to a rough steep track on your right. The turn off is not signposted. This is the rocky, scrubby, steep, summit track.

On the way up you will pass the "Two and a Half Sisters", line them up and note which of the surrounding peaks they point to. The vegetation is low and heath-like, allowing views all the way to the top. The panorama from Stephens Peak is the best to be had in the area. Return via the same route.

The wildflowers too, are particularly abundant. Some spring and summer wildflowers that can be seen are christmas bells, purple fan flower,



mountain devil, lady's slipper, matchsticks, gymea lily, brown beak orchid, onion orchid, milkmaids, wedding bush and banksias.

9

Wreck Beach

Time: 40 minutes return.

Grade 3: Walk on a fire trail at first. The last section, on to the beach, is a steep descent on a washed out track (moderately dangerous). 1 km return.

Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

Features: A short walk to a picturesque, isolated beach. Be aware that nude sunbathing often occurs on this beach (the only "official" nude bathing area is Samurai Beach, further to the south).

Directions: The walk can be started from either Verona Rd. or Lionel Ave. Shoal Bay. Follow the fire trail that heads directly eastwards towards Wreck Beach. The last part of the route is a walking track that drops steeply down to the beach. Wreck Beach is a pleasant place for a swim, but you do so at your own risk. An interesting side trip is to follow the rocks around the northern end of the beach to another beach sometimes called "Paradise Beach". This tiny patch of sand is only accessible at low tide and the walk there involves some rock hopping and a little climbing. An interesting curiosity in a dramatic setting.

10

Three Peaks

Time: 1 hour 20 minutes return.

Grade 2: A hilly walk on a sandy and rocky surface along a fire trail. 4 km return without side trips.

Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

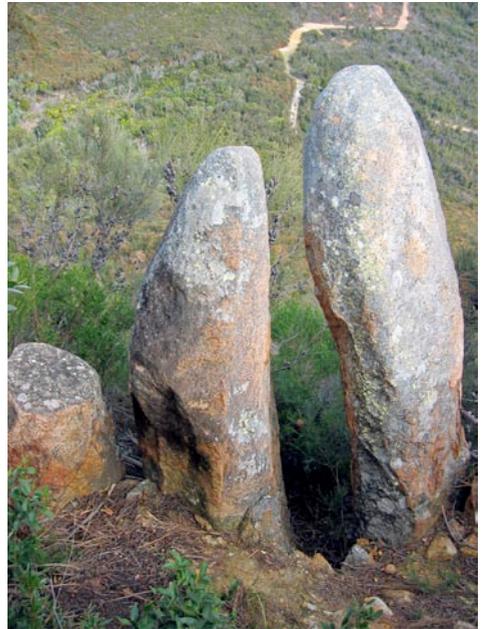
Features: An easy walk with no difficult navigation problems. Plenty of wildflowers and birds mixed among the dramatic landscapes of peak and surf. There are worthy side trip options to Green Hill, Box Beach, Quarry

Hill, Wreck Beach, Stephens Peak and Zenith Beach. Allow extra time for these.

Directions: The walk commences at the southern end of Ocean Beach Road, Shoal Bay. Here a fire trail heads north east behind the houses that back onto Tomaree National Park. The fire trail crosses the foothills of three of the most dominant hills on the Tomaree Peninsula. The steepest climb occurs at the base of Stephens Peak, after which the track descends towards the Joleen Crescent track head. Continue on to the Zenith Beach upper carpark. (This carpark is not considered a safe place to leave an unattended vehicle.) Zenith Beach is a good place to enjoy the pleasures of surf and sand. Swim at your own risk. Return along the same route, organize to be picked up, or wander through the residential streets back to the start.



Scented Sun Orchid



The 'two and a half sisters', on the southern side of Stephens Peak. The Three Peaks track is visible in the background (Shoal Bay East Trail).

Point Stephens

Time: 2 hours 30 minutes return.

Grade 4: A longish walk on soft sand, with a few sandhills, 6 km return. A hot, dry walk in the summer.

Map: Tomaree Head to Point Stephens, page 10.

Features: The walk starts in a mature angophora forest full of wildflowers and birds. The route then passes through sand dunes and crosses a sand spit to the “island” of Point Stephens. Point Stephens has an interesting history, well documented in the book “Sheer Grit”, by A. Murdoch. The Point has a lighthouse (1862) and the ruins of the lighthouse keeper’s cottage. Swimming is possible on the beaches (surf bathing is patrolled in front of Fingal Bay Surf Club for part of the year). Fishing, diving and snorkeling opportunities are excellent.

Directions: Start at the southern end of Ocean Beach Road, Shoal Bay. Here a fire trail (Ocean Beach Trail) heads south east through a forest, ending abruptly at a steep

sand dune. After climbing the dune (it is very steep) the condition of the spit becomes visible. Proceed across the dunes and cross the spit if it is safe.

Once on the island a well worn track leads to the lighthouse and ruins. Half way across the island another track leads north to Gantry Bay, where lighthouse supplies were once loaded, and to Murdoch’s shell grit lease. Return to the start along the same route, before the spit is covered with water. Some side trips are worthy of your consideration.

It is possible, but not easy, to walk around the whole island. This requires a lot of rock hopping and will take about 4 hours for the complete circuit. Such a trip is easier at low tide.

The 77 metre high Mount Stephens can also be climbed with extreme difficulty. Approached from the spit side, it involves some scary climbing through very thick scrub. At the summit there are some military relics left from 1943 when a garrison platoon kept lookout as part of Fort Tomaree. I left a visitors book on top of Mount Stephens in 1993. On revisiting 5 years later there were only two signatures in the book.



Point Stephens lighthouse keepers' cottage (shortly after it was burnt down in 1991) and before the protective fencing was erected.



Point Stephens lighthouse buildings, before the fire, as seen from Stephens Peak.



Pine Heath



"The spit" on a good day



"The spit" washed out



Ladies' Tresses, *Spiranthes sinensis*, is a ground orchid that prefers wet areas and grows to 45 cm high. Dozens of small pink and white flowers spiral up the stem. It flowers October to March on Point Stephens.



Point Stephens Lighthouse,
now automatic and solar powered

CROSSING THE SPIT

Point Stephens is an "island" joined by a sand spit to Fingal Bay. In the 1860s when the lighthouse was built the spit was high and dry, 200m wide, 5m higher than the tide and covered in low bushes. A telegraph line to the lighthouse was hung on poles across the spit. A gale in the 1890s washed the spit away. Bedrock under the spit is 6 metres below sea level.

The spit today is often dry at low tide and sometimes at high tide. It is not always possible to walk across the spit. There is always an element of risk, an accurate knowledge of the tides is essential. Several people have died crossing the spit. Visiting the island by boat is also possible.

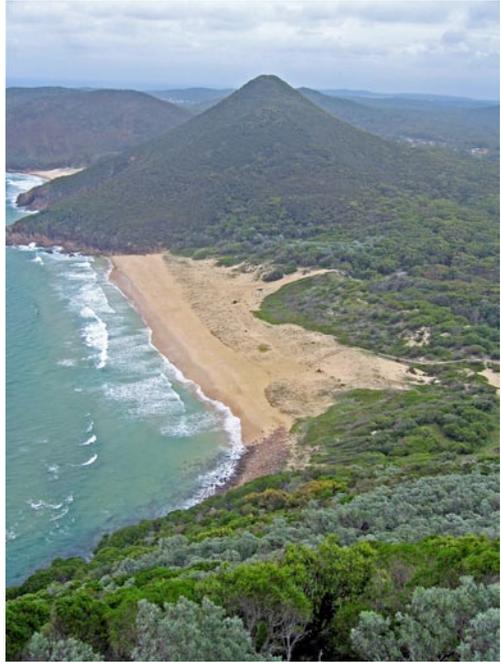
Most people spend about an hour on the island. In this case it would be best to cross the spit one hour before low tide. Plan to re-cross the spit at low tide or at the same state of tide that you came over on. One of the best places to examine the state of the spit is at the southern end of Garuwa Street, Fingal Bay.



The turning mechanism for the Fort Tomaree (1942) radar, at the top of Tomaree.



Handsome
Flat
Pea



Zenith Beach and Stephens Peak,
as seen from Tomaree



Tomaree, as seen from the sea. The fissure, which almost cuts the headland in half, is known as "Mrs. Murphy's"

Tomaree Summit Track

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes return.

Grade 2: A heart-thumping steep climb to an elevation of 158 metres above sea level. 1.5 km return.

Map: Tomaree Headland, page 18.

Features: More than 100,000 people a year walk to the top of Tomaree Headland. Most of the track is paved on the moderate slopes. Steel stairways and walkways cover the steep, rocky sections. Spectacular views and an interesting military history. The most popular walk.

Directions: The route to the top of Tomaree starts at the car park in front of the gates to Tomaree Lodge. The summit track runs through E to F.

To visit the "six inch" gun emplacements, branch off at E and walk down the pathway to G and on to H. This walk is well sign-posted.

After you have visited the gun emplacements return by walking back through point E to the car park.

Anyone who climbs Tomaree Head can collect a free 'Certificate Of Ascension' from the Visitor Information Centre at Nelson Bay to commemorate the event. Copies of 'The Guns of Tomaree', by Michael Smith and Graeme Steinbeck, are available from the visitors' centre for those interested in the military history of Tomaree headland.



One of the two "6 inch" gun emplacements on Tomaree Headland



Photographs above show some of what is behind the locked steel doors of the gun emplacements on Tomaree Headland



Behind the locked steel doors of the gun emplacements on Tomaree Headland

13

Ocean Rocks Track

Time: 45 minutes return.

Grade 4: Moderately difficult climb on a rocky track. Some rock hopping. 1.2 km.

Map: Tomaree Headland, page 18.

Features: This track is used by fishermen to gain access to what has been voted Australia's third best rock fishing hot spot (after Jervis Bay and Sydney Rocks). From the rocks you can watch the fishing activities of marlin, tuna, tailor, tern, gannet, albatross, dolphin, whale and man.

Directions: The route to the top of Tomaree starts at the car park in front of the gates to Tomaree Lodge. Turn off the paved path 200 metres up the hill on to a bush track and head for point **I** shown on the map. As you near the water's edge the track disappears and it is necessary to rock hop to explore further. Return along the same route or branch off the track to climb to the top of Tomaree.



Purple Fan Flower

FORT TOMAREE

Port Stephens is a superb natural harbour with the two distinctive peaks of Yacaaba and Tomaree marking the entrance. Visible from the water are a number of concrete structures dating from the early days of World War Two. 1942 was a worrying year for Australia, as Darwin was bombed and a number of coastal cities were shelled, including nearby Newcastle. Fort Tomaree was constructed to protect Port Stephens. The main defensive weapons were two six inch (152mm) guns, capable of penetrating 150mm of steel at 14 kilometres. Their purpose was to sink shipping. The stated aim of Fort Tomaree was "to deny the use of the Port to an attacking force". Troops were housed in buildings now taken over by Tomaree Lodge. Most of the relics that were part of Fort Tomaree lie in Tomaree National Park.

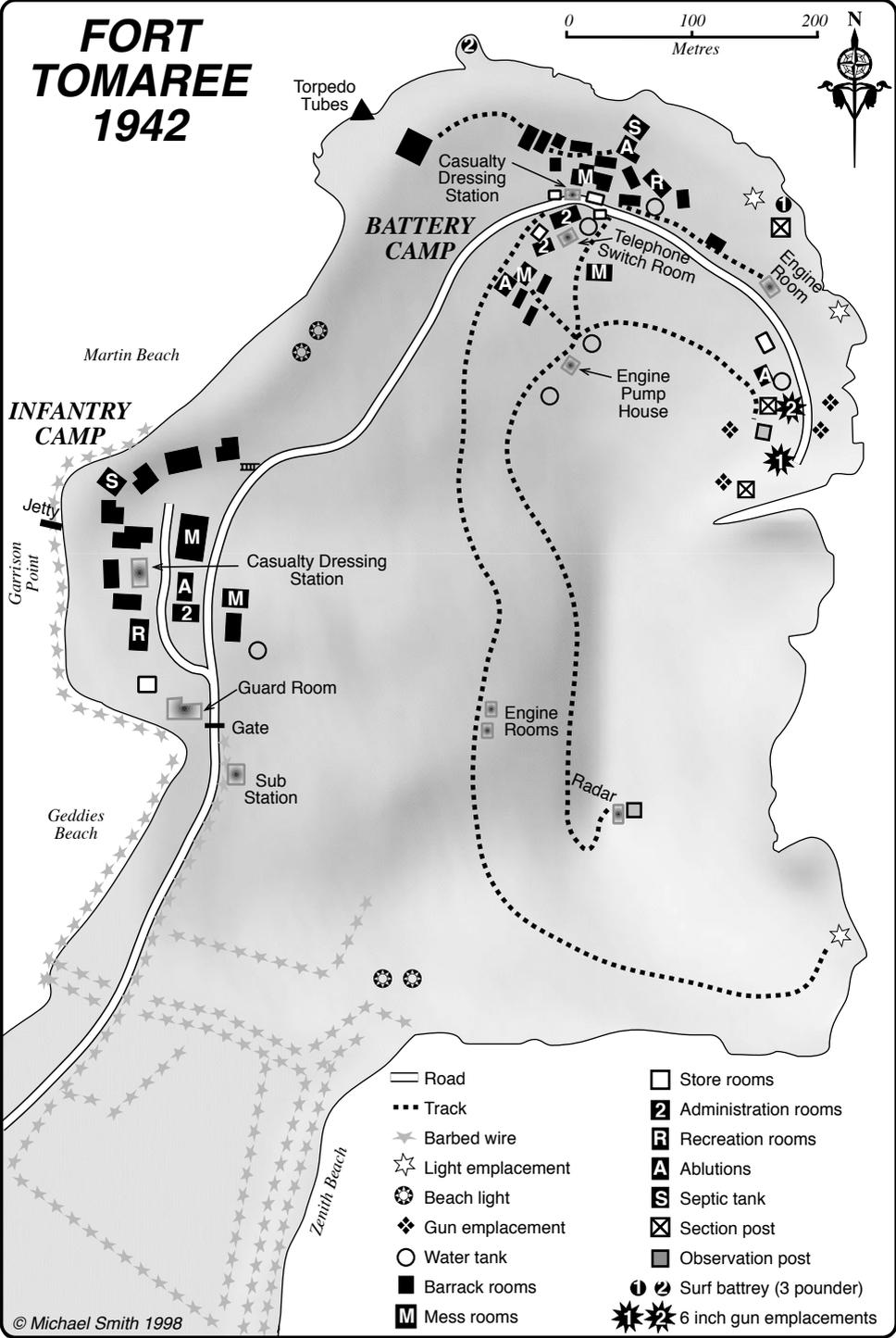
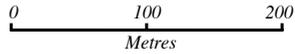
At the water's edge a jetty was built to hold two torpedo tubes, a last defence against enemy shipping. Two other gun emplacements housed three pounder guns known as the 'surf battery', to provide defence against fast moving vessels. Fort Tomaree also had anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, observation posts and plotting rooms. An Air Force early warning radar was located at the top of the hill.

For nearly seventy years these reinforced concrete structures have survived the wear of salt spray and curious visitors. They stand a silent seaward watch, their job completed.

The map opposite is from 'The Guns of Tomaree', by Michael Smith and Graeme Steinbeck.

It may help explain the former use of the various buildings, concrete slabs and fortifications that you come across on the headland.

FORT TOMAREE 1942



- Road
- - - Track
- ★ Barbed wire
- ☆ Light emplacement
- ☉ Beach light
- ◆ Gun emplacement
- Water tank
- Barrack rooms
- M Mess rooms
- Store rooms
- 2 Administration rooms
- R Recreation rooms
- A Ablutions
- S Septic tank
- ⊠ Section post
- ▣ Observation post
- ⓘ Surf battery (3 pounder)
- ☀ 6 inch gun emplacements

Tomaree Headland

PORT STEPHENS

"TOMAREE LODGE"

Torpedo tubes



gate
Jetty
gate

Walks
12
13

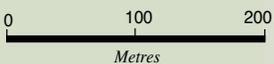
Car Park

158m
F

I

Zenith Beach

	Road
	Walking Track
	Walking Track
	Minor track
	Six inch gun emplacements
	Three pounder gun emplacements



© Michael Smith 2008



Shoal Bay from Tomaree



Christmas Bush



Donkey Orchid



Conestick



Trigger Plant



Grass Tree



Banksia

Soldiers Point

Time: 2 hours 30 minutes.

Grade 3: A longish walk on sand and rock (easier at low tide) with a few minor navigation challenges, 9 km.

Map: Soldiers Point, page 20.

Features: Sandy beaches, expensive real estate, parks, jetties, boats, marinas, boat ramps, caves, forests, cabbage tree palms, wildflowers, oysters and the possibility of a koala.

Directions: Commence at the waterfront car park at the intersection of Cook Street and Foreshore Drive, Salamander Bay. Follow the track around Wanda Wanda Head, past a number of caves and through a tiny patch of rainforest at the southern end of Wanda Beach.

Follow the sand, grass and rocks along Wanda Beach, through Kangaroo Point to the boat ramp at Soldiers Point. On the way, take a side trip to Cecilia Cromarty's grave. She died in 1862 and is buried in front of 10 Seaview Crescent. Johnny's Well can be seen near the boat ramp behind the Salamander Hotel. Continue around the water's edge past the marina, Cromarty jetty, Pearson Park and around Greenplay Point. Here the mangroves start in earnest and it is necessary to walk past the last waterfront property and uphill towards the houses that front Kent Gardens. A series of parks will lead you to Cromarty Bay Road. The paved part of Cromarty Bay Road ends in bushland (Stony Ridge Reserve), turn left up the hill and follow the fire trail until the caravan park is sighted. Leave the fire trail and keeping to the left of the caravan park join Fleet Street and Wanda Beach. Retrace your steps to the start.



Above, Salamander Bay waterfront



This Helmet Orchid is common in the wet areas of Stony Ridge Reserve



Maiangal Track



This **canoe tree** at Soldiers Point is a living link with the aborigines who lived here before the white man arrived. In the spring, when the sap was flowing, a large piece of bark was removed from this tree to be used as a canoe. A canoe of 2 metres would hold 2 people, 2 1/2 metres three people and a 3 1/2 metre canoe would hold 4 people.

Sometimes you can see steps cut into the tree to gain access to the bark several metres above the ground. The bark was levered away from the tree and carefully lowered to the ground. The ends were bound or plugged with clay. Often, a tree with a curve in it was preferred.

In this case the ends were already turned up clear of the water. At one end a fire was kept alight on a bed of clay. Such a canoe would last three to nine months. This type of canoe-making disappeared from Port Stephens in about the 1880's.



Soldiers Point waterfront

Time: 3 days. Can be broken up into day trips.

Grade 4: A long backpack journey with plenty of challenges, 45km one way.

Map: Maiangal Track, page 23. Also CMA 1:25000 Newcastle, Williamstown, Morna Point and Port Stephens.

Features: A huge beach 32km long, backed by sand dunes, Aboriginal shell middens, war relics, sea birds, wildflowers, volcanic peaks and Tomaree National Park. Carrying sufficient water in the warm months of the year may be a problem. Camping in Tomaree National Park is not permitted but there are a number of caravan parks and other types of accommodation in the area. For details contact Port Stephens Visitor Centre on 1800 808 900.

Directions: The directions that follow are only a brief outline. There are plans for a book and a map with more extensive details.

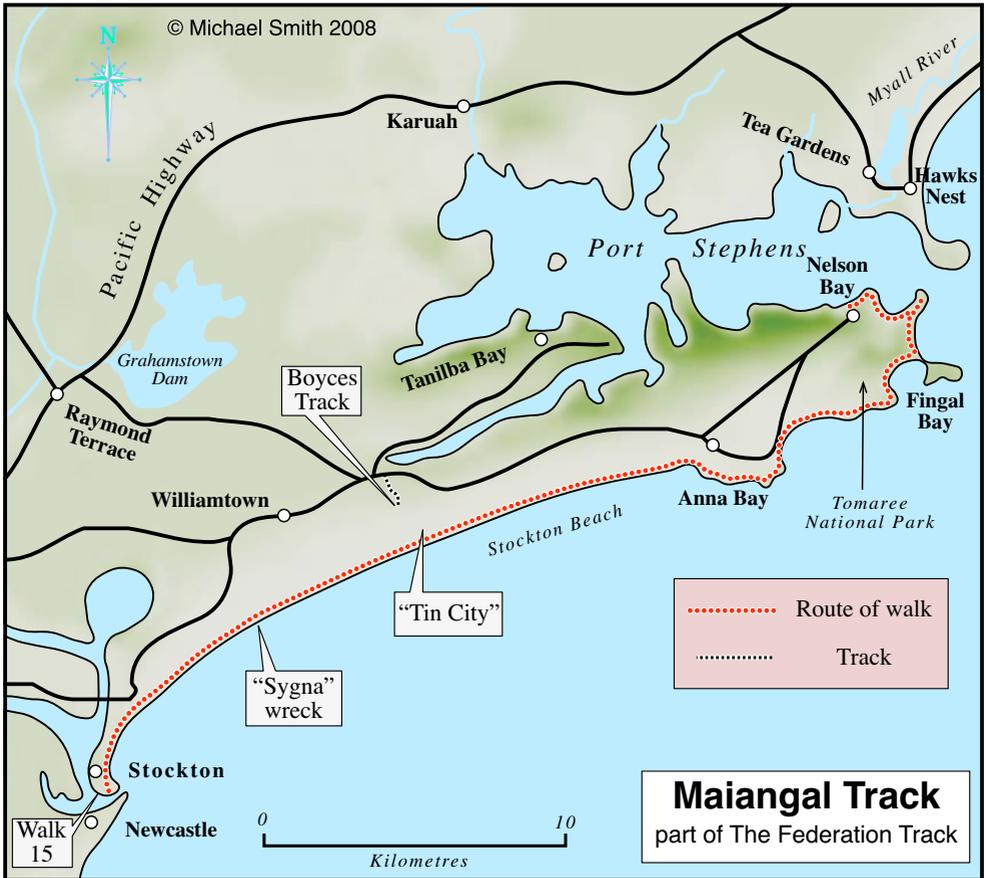
The walk starts at the Stockton ferry terminal. Follow the Hunter River upstream via the parks that line the river bank. Turn right into Griffith Avenue and head for Stockton Beach.

You can camp on Stockton Beach, but check the rules first. There is no water in the area and you will have to carry enough water for the first 2 days. Walking is on soft sand. Water is available at Anna Bay.

Continue up the beach to Anna Bay where there is a caravan park on the headland, Birubi Point. The last section of this walk follows the rocky coast, in Tomaree National Park. From here on, all the maps needed are in this book.

Follow the cycleway through Anna Bay and then around the rocks and on fire trails to One Mile Beach. Follow the sand through Samurai Beach, then through Boulder Bay to the Fingal Bay cycleway. Camping is allowed at the caravan parks at One Mile Beach, Middle Rock, Fingal Bay and Shoal Bay.

At the end of the cycleway take the fire trail past Green Hill, Quarry



Hill, Stephens Peak, and Tomaree. Follow Shoal Bay Beach to Little Beach and on to the finish at Nelson Bay Harbour.

Maiangal (MY_AN_GAL) was the name of the Aboriginal tribe that lived in this area prior to European settlement. Their territory extended from Stockton to Tomaree and west to Tilligerry Creek.



Pipis are abundant on Stockton Beach

The Federation Track is a bushwalking route that will eventually extend 7000 kilometres from Brisbane in Queensland to Angorichina in the South Australian Flinders Ranges. It runs along existing walking tracks, fire trails and disused rail lines.

The Maiangal Track is included in the section known as Federation Track North. The Maiangal Track joins the 250km Great North Walk from Sydney to Newcastle and the Tops To Myalls track from Hawks Nest to Barrington Tops. Both these walks have their own guide book.

Boyces Track

Remains of
barbed wire left
over from WW2,
on Stockton
Beach



Time: 3 hours.

Grade 4: A longish walk on sand and fire trails, 9 km.

Map: Boyces Track, page 25.

Features: Kangaroos, wildflowers, orchids, forested sand dunes, mobile sand dunes, squatters huts, military relics and aboriginal shell middens.

Directions: Start at the intersection of Nelson Bay Road and Boyces Track. The track is not sign posted. Follow Boyces Track

to the shifting sand dunes (access along this section is possible by 4 wheel drive).

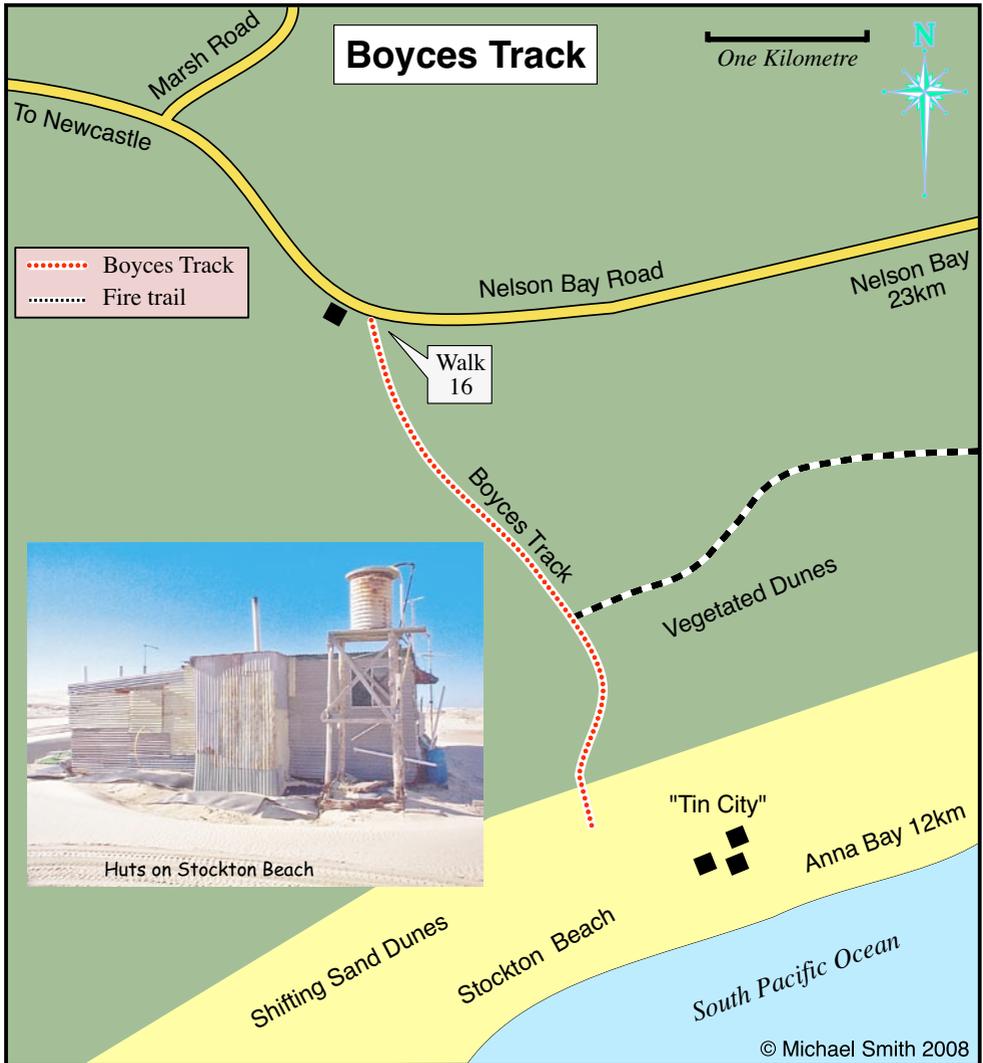
A walk down Boyces Track is full of surprises. The first three kilometres pass through an angophora forest, the understory littered with macrozamia palms, bracken, banksias, wildflowers, orchids and lots of kangaroo tracks. The process of shifting sand swallowing up the forest can be seen when the first dunes are encountered. A vast and somewhat stark landscape can be viewed from the highest dunes, which are 20 metres above sea level. To the left a number of tin huts can be seen.



Wreck of the Sygna
on Stockton Beach



Stockton dunes



© Michael Smith 2008

Carry plenty of water, and sun glasses are necessary all year. Watch out for vehicles at the water's edge along Stockton Beach.

On the way, look for fox and rabbit tracks. Any concentration of shells in the sand is probably an indication of an aboriginal shell midden, an ancient campsite. Rows of rusted star pickets in the sand are from a barbed wire entanglement dating back to the war years of the 1940s.

Just above the high tide mark lies the flotsam of our industrial society.

Each year at the end of September thousands of exhausted and dead Muttonbirds are washed up on the beach.

Boyces Track is the northern limit of the Recreational Vehicle Area. All sorts of mechanical beasts roam the area. It is not a good idea to wander too far as you have to find your tracks and follow them back over the dunes to join up with Boyces Track again.



Stockton Beach



Broughton Island Summit

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes.

Grade 3: An easy, open rocky walk with a lot of hill climbing on mostly gradual gradients. On Broughton there is always a chance of injury from falling through muttonbird burrows. 3 km return.

Map: Broughton Island, page 31.

Features: Sandy beaches, spectacular views, muttonbirds, whistling kites, sea eagles, aboriginal shell middens, freshwater cave, Green & Golden Bell Frog, penguin rookery and great fishing.

Directions: There are two main ways to reach the summit of Broughton Island. **THE QUICK WAY.** From the huts in Esmeralda Cove climb the hill to point **L**. Proceed 100 metres north east and drop down to the northernmost beach in Esmeralda Cove. This beach is where campers can pitch their tents. If it is low to mid tide it is easiest to walk around the rocks (past the drinking water pipe) for about 50 metres and then head up to the track at the top of the cliffs. (If this section looks unsafe a track leads up a gully in the corner of the beach and joins the main track. This short section is wet, overgrown and littered with muttonbird burrows.) The walking is now open, through low scrub, rock and grass. At point **K** follow the ridge to the top, 89 metres above sea level. Return along the same route. A more interesting return can be made by dropping down to the top of the cliffs and following them back to point **K**. There is no track here so you will have to walk down a scrubby, rocky slope.

The second way (2.5 hours) is more difficult and longer but is a real showcase of what Broughton has to offer. Make your way through **L** to Providence Beach, also known as North Beach. Turn right and cross two more beaches and some rocky coastline to a gully at **J** (this section of 700 metres can only be done at mid to low tide). There is a Fairy Penguin rookery

in this area. From this point you cannot walk around the rocks much further and it is necessary to climb up the gully. The climb is only about 15 metres long. From here simply walk up the hill to the highest point.

A remarkable feature near here is Fresh Water Cave. It is very difficult to locate and it is safest if you can find someone to show you the route. After climbing the gully at **J** keep to the cliff tops for about 50 metres. You should be at the top of Elephant Head. If you walk downhill a little, you will be standing at the top of the elephant's trunk, where the trunk meets the brow. From this point, Fresh Water Cave is to your right and downhill. You will need some confidence and luck to find it but it is a very special place. Fresh Water Cave is a ferny, mossy cave containing a pool of precious fresh water. It is about 3 metres above sea level. Once you have enjoyed the views from the summit, 89 metres above sea level, proceed down the ridge to **K**, or drop down to the top of the cliffs for more dramatic vistas.



Looking towards Little Broughton Island from the top of Broughton Island



Fairy Penguin (now called Little Penguin), *Eudyptula minor*. This is the only penguin that breeds on Australia, and Port Stephens is about as far north as they generally come. Fairy Penguins come ashore after dark and leave their burrows before first light. From July on there is much activity around the colonies on Broughton Island. One parent will sit on the 2 eggs for up to 10 days and then be relieved by its mate. When the chicks are two weeks old both parents will have to go to sea to get enough food for the family of four. Some penguins will raise a second family in the same season. At about 30 cm tall, this is the smallest penguin of the world's seventeen penguin species. Their burrows amongst the tussock grass may be as far as 300 metres from the water's edge. They sensibly wait an hour after dark to come ashore. The young disperse about mid October. Three years later they will return to the area they were born in to breed. If they survive the predation of sea birds, sharks and sea lions they may live to 20 years of age.



Muttonbird

Leaving Port Stephens for Broughton Island



Muttonbird
on Broughton Island

Muttonbird, *Puffinus tenuirostris*. Since they were here last year, muttonbirds (short tailed shearwater) have flown to New Zealand, the North Pacific, Japan and the Arctic Seas. Each year 23 million birds circumnavigate the Pacific in their annual migration of 30,000 km. They have a wing span of one metre and can fly up to 40 knots. If the exhausted birds arrive during a food shortage their depleted bodies can be seen in large numbers washed up on the beaches.

Birds have numerous adaptations to save weight and as male muttonbirds approach Australia their testes swell up. After mating these same organs shrink over the following few weeks so that if anything happens to the egg the pair cannot fertilize another.

In the last week in September muttonbirds meet on Broughton Island and other islands south to Tasmania. They locate their mate from last year, find their old burrow, and mate. They then leave the burrow for 3 weeks to put on fat for egg-laying and incubation.

The male undertakes the first incubation, of a single egg, for 13 days. Then the female takes over for a similarly long spell. The birds only come ashore after dark and if they arrive early they will raft-up around the island.

Half the chicks will die in the first year and the rest will not breed until they are 5 years old. They can continue breeding for more than 35 years. Most eggs are laid on the 25th November.

The best way to see muttonbirds is to camp on Broughton Island. All night the birds fly silently and low to their underground nests.

Chicks in the nest make a lot of noise and often sound like babies crying.

Lots of muttonbirds are taken by sharks, their chicks will then die of hunger. The chicks are fed on krill and squid, regurgitated by one of the parents. To save weight on long feeding flights the catch is reduced to oil.

The muttonbird diet consists of small fish (25%), squid and cuttlefish (35%) and krill (40%).



Looking Glass Isle as seen from Broughton Island



The Huts on Broughton Island

Rainbow Cave

Time: 1 - 2 hours.

Grade 4: This walk involves a climb/slide down a steep slope (cliff). There is a lot of walking on loose rounded beach pebbles and hard abrasive volcanic rocks. On Broughton there is always a chance of injury from falling through muttonbird burrows. 2 km return. You can avoid the cliff climb by doing the walk in reverse and returning along the same path.

Map: Broughton Island, page 31.

Features: The fascinating and colorful “Rainbow Cave”, a beach of smoothly-polished pebbles, aboriginal grinding grooves, a seabird rookery, fabulous flotsam and intriguing geology. Whilst not a particularly long walk there is so much to look at that it would be a great waste to do it in less than two hours.

Directions: This walk, like all on Broughton Island, is done more easily at low tide. It is only possible to enter Rainbow Cave at the lower half of the tide.

From point **L** walk west through the sand blow-out to the cliffs above Coal Shaft Bay. Follow the top of the cliffs south for about 100 metres until a way down the cliffs seems possible. There is no track along this section which is cratered with muttonbird burrows. From late November till April there will be birds in these burrows. (This difficult cliff-top section can be avoided by using another track that branches off a track which passes above the huts in Esmeralda Cove). Good luck if you made it down the cliffs OK.

Rainbow Cave lies at the northern end of the small sandy beach. The cave is just above sea level and passes right through the cliff.

Follow the rocks around to the ‘sea gull rookery’. Birds will be nesting here from mid-winter till mid-summer. The presence of eggs or chicks is signalled by the massing, screeching and swooping of the parent birds. If this is the case, do NOT enter the area. Continue on to point **N**, at the end of a bouldery beach, and pick up the track back to the huts.



Cleaning up Broughton Island



From inside Rainbow Cave



Esmeralda Cove



The colors of Broughton





Rainbow Cave, Broughton Island

Legend of Port Stephens

There were three brothers, two were grown up and warriors. They had a little brother playing about at their camp. The brothers went out hunting. The little one went after birds up where this snake was. He climbed up a big hill where he saw birds. He saw a carpet snake curled up on the ground. He dropped his playthings and got a big stick and hit at him. The snake put his body around him squeezing him all over and swallowed the boy. Afterward he went right away to the sea shore. He made a track like a paved roadway. He went into the water, with the boy in his inside. He swam out to a small island. The south side of the island was all rock and the north side level and sandy. On the south side was a big rock with a cave in it. The snake went into this cave and stopped there.

The two brothers felt that something was wrong with their brother. They asked their wives at the camp where their little brother was. They knew not. One said, "I'll go up the hill". They went to see the brother. He saw the playthings of his brother there also the stick he was going to hit the snake with. He tracked the snake to the shore and went

out in their canoes to the island and looked in the cave. "I think he has gone in that cave". They then paddled around to the north side of the cave. They searched about on the island. They then concluded the snake was in the cave. The eldest brother said "you go and strike the rock on that side and bring thunder". The oldest brother said "you stand back this way while I strike the rock on the other side" - this burst it open.

They went in and saw the snake dead. They brought him and swayed him about in the water. They jumped into their canoes - it had a Kurrajong line - made just for the snake, and towed him to the mainland. When they got ashore they caught hold of the end of the line and hauled the snake in to the beach. They dragged him up on dry land. They took a sharp flint stone and felt about where the brother was in a protuberance in the snake's body. They then cut the snake open with the sharp flint. On cutting through the skin they struck their brother on the knee. He called, "Oh brother you are cutting my knees". They then cut on a fresh place and brought him out on the dry sand. They picked their brother up and threw him in the sea. The sea washed him ashore. His brother threw him out again to wash him. They then lit a fire for him to warm himself. They warmed a lot of bushes and spread their brother on them with his belly upward. They turned him all ways to get the water out of him. When they had all the water out of him the elder brother blew in the little fellow's ears. They kept turning him about on the warm bushes, until sundown. They made a little camp for him close to their own camp. They painted him up with clay before going to the bunan.

Coal Shaft Bay

Time: 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Grade 4-5: This walk involves a climb down a cliff. There is some walking on loose rounded beach pebbles and hard abrasive volcanic rocks. On Broughton there is always a chance of injury from falling through muttonbird burrows. 2 km return.

Map: Broughton Island, page 31.

Features: Caves in Coal Shaft Bay, superb swimming off a sandy beach, bizarre geology and some dramatic gorges.

Directions: This walk, like all on Broughton Island, is done more easily at low tide. From point **L** walk west through the sand blowout to the cliffs above Coal Shaft Bay. Follow the top of the cliffs north west, above Coal Shaft Bay. The track here is overgrown and studded with muttonbird burrows. There are two places where you can scramble down to the beach. They are marked with pieces of rope, use them at your own risk. The easiest way of the two commences just above the western end of Coal Shaft Beach. There is good fishing and swimming over the sands of this beach. Once on the sand look for two caves in the cliffs at the back of the beach.

Follow the water's edge around to point **M**, where you will see a remarkable gorge, the narrowest and deepest on Broughton. From this point it is about the same effort to return to the start along the same route. Alternatively, for a bit of variety, head overland to the next gorge and join the track to Providence Beach. This is Broughton's biggest beach, and is good swimming, depending on wind direction. Just before the rocks start, the main track across Broughton is picked up to return to the start.



The view from Gan Gan Hill

Lily Hill Slopes

Time: 40 minutes.

Grade 3: An easy walk on fire trails with a few short, steep sandy hills to walk up. 1.5 km return.

Map: Gan Gan Hill, page 35.

Features: Banksias, gymea lilies, scribbly gums, black wattle and plenty of wildflowers.

Directions: Commence at point **O** on Wallowa Road (opposite number 95).

Follow the muddy fire trail generally south west. This section has the highest density of gymea lilies on the peninsula. After about 100 metres a track leads off the right up a steep hill. This is an optional side trip and is recommended in the spring. The area abounds with orchids (spring) and Christmas Bells (summer). Continue on through **Q** and **P** back to the start.

An optional side trip, (35 minutes return), can be made by continuing on to the cycleway at **R**. This section features a steep walk through a wet forest. This walk is particularly interesting in heavy rain.

Some, or all, of this walk may disappear to housing subdivisions in the future.

Gan Gan Hill

Time: 45 minutes return.

Grade 2: A heart thumping walk, on bitumen, up a steep hill (100m rise in elevation). 2.5 km return.

Map: Gan Gan Hill, page 35.

Features: Great exercise. Excellent views from the highest peak on the Tomaree Peninsula. Most plants that grow in the area are represented along the route of this walk. In season the following orchids can be seen: pixie cap, greenhood (3 types), climbing, leek, onion, hyacinth, red beard, donkey, spider, brown beak, pink finger, white finger, blue finger, scented sun and the rare leafless tongue orchid.

Directions: Commence at the start of the cycleway at the corner of Stockton Street and Galoola Drive, Nelson Bay. Follow the cycleway to Lily Hill Road and up the hill to the summit, 160 metres above sea level. Return by the same route. Whilst not strictly a bushwalk this is one of the most rewarding walks in the area.

All of the orchids on this and the page opposite, can be seen on the side of Lily Hill Road



Birds mouth



Cobra greenhood



Leafless tongue



Brown beak



Mayfly



Nodding greenhood



Flying duck



Autumn bird



Pixie cap



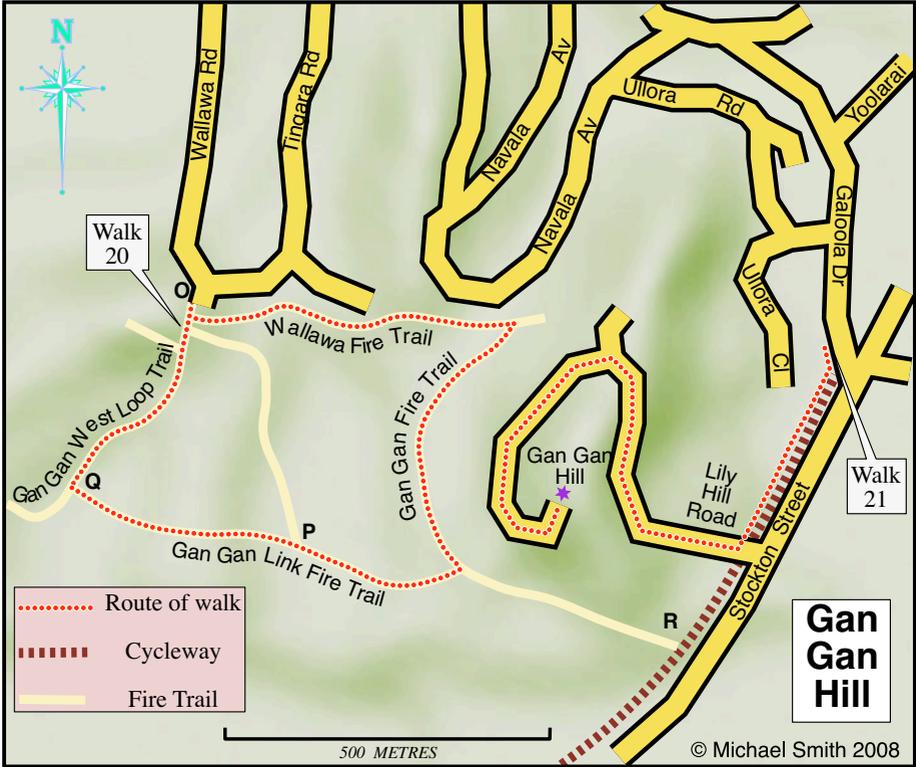
Red beak



Greenhood



Hyacinth



Kurrara Hill

Time: 1.5 hours return.

Grade 5: A scramble up one of the steepest, scrubbiest and rockiest peaks around. There are no tracks. 1 km return.

Map: Grovers Hill, page 36.

Features: A challenge, nature in the raw. There are two distinct summits. The south peak is a superb place to enjoy lunch. The views are good. If you revel in a challenge this one is for you.

Directions: Commence at the south-eastern-most tennis court at the Nelson Bay Tennis Club, next to the Bowling Club off Stockton Street, Nelson Bay.

From the base of the hill walk directly up to the summit, about 140 metres above sea level. There are no tracks, take your time. Good luck.



Large waxlip



Tongue



Red beard



Pink finger



Big Rocky

Time: 2.5 hours return.

Grade 3: A walk on a degraded, overgrown fire trail. The track is generally sandy, with a few boggy sections. Side trips down to the water's edge involve some rock hopping. 6 km return.

Map: Glovers Hill, page 36.

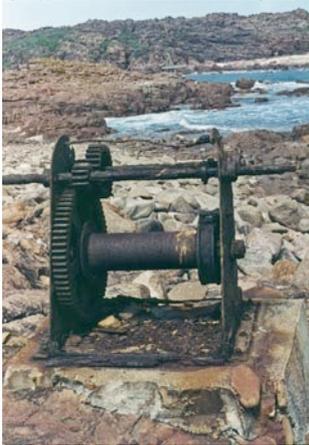
Features: Scrubby coastal heathland with an abundance of wildflowers. Greenhood and pixie cap orchids in the winter. Access to lots of rugged coastal scenery. Big Rocky is an island and was the site of shell grit mining in the 1930s. Swimming and fishing are good.

Directions: Commence at the Boulder Bay sewage treatment works at the end of Rocky Point Road, Fingal Bay. A car park is located at the end of the road. The track departs from the western side of the treatment works and runs parallel to the coastline, generally westward.

There are a few interesting side tracks leading down to the water. As an option these tracks can be joined up by walking along the water's edge (some rugged rock hopping and tricky navigation).

Eventually vehicle tracks are encountered as you near Big Rocky. You know you are there when you see the remains of a winch and the supports of a flying fox once used to carry

shell grit off the island. This is the end of the walk, return along the same route. From Big Rocky it is possible to extend the walk along the rocks to the northern end of Samurai Beach.



Big Rocky winch

SWIMMING at Big Rocky. Rocky Cauldron is a natural saltwater spa that makes a great swimming hole. If you stand beside the winch and look towards the island, Rocky Cauldron is about half way. A surge-shaped hole in the rocks with a coarse sandy bottom, the spa effect is at its best when the tide is at about 1 metre. At low tide it is a bit tame, at high tide with a bit of a swell running it can be more than boisterous.

If you fancy a swim there are a few more (high tide) swimming possibilities within the next 500 metres around the rocks westward, towards Samurai Beach.



Rocky Cauldron



Dusky coral pea



Granny's bonnet

Fingal Bay West Ridge

Time: 1 hour.

Grade 3: A few steep sandy hills. 4 km.

Map: Glovers Hill, page 36.

Features: Scrubby coastal heathland mixed with patches of tall forests. Views over Fingal Bay and the spit. Plenty of wildflowers. Lots of animal tracks. Good variety and an easy introduction to the water catchment area.

Directions: Commence at the Fingal Bay Bowls Club, Rocky Point Road, Fingal Bay. Hop the fence at the rear of the car park, turn left and walk up the steep sandhill. At the top of the hill, **T**, turn left on to the “West Ridge” trail. The section from **T** to **U** has all the views so seek them out, they may be overgrown.

At **U** turn right on to the “Oyster Shell Trail” and after 200 metres turn right on to the “Fence Line Trail” and follow it back to the start.

This walk can be extended by turning left onto the fence line trail, connecting with the north south trail, turning right on to the power line trail (gravel) and following the fence line trail back to the start. This extended route will take an extra hour to complete.

Yacaaba

Time: 2-4 hours.

Grade 3: Slow going in the sand followed by a steep climb. 4-8 km.

Map: Yacaaba Headland Walk, page 39.

Features: A walk along an interesting spit (tombolo) with lots of shells and flotsam, an interesting wet cabbage tree forest followed by a big climb to 217 metres above sea level. Koalas and dolphins. A long tiring walk.

Directions: The real problem with this walk is how to get there from the southern side of Port Stephens. The ferry can drop you off at Tea Gardens, but you will need about 5 hours to complete the walk from the jetty.

The Glovers Hill Map on page 23 shows an area that is used by the Hunter Water Corporation for water catchment. It provides Nelson Bay’s drinking water and is also part of Tomaree National Park. There are colonies of koalas, kangaroos, bandicoots and possums, and it is our best area for viewing wildflowers.

Walking is easy on sandy trails. Some trails are sign posted. Navigation can be difficult. Many of the trails shown on the map on page 36 are not being maintained and will eventually return to natural bushland. There are many good walks to be enjoyed in the Park, only a few of which are detailed in this guide. You can enter this area from either the Fingal Bay Sports Club, Boulder Bay Road, the Polyclinic, off the Shoal Bay cycleway or from any number of points along the road to Big Rocky (4 wheel drive, off Gan Gan Road).

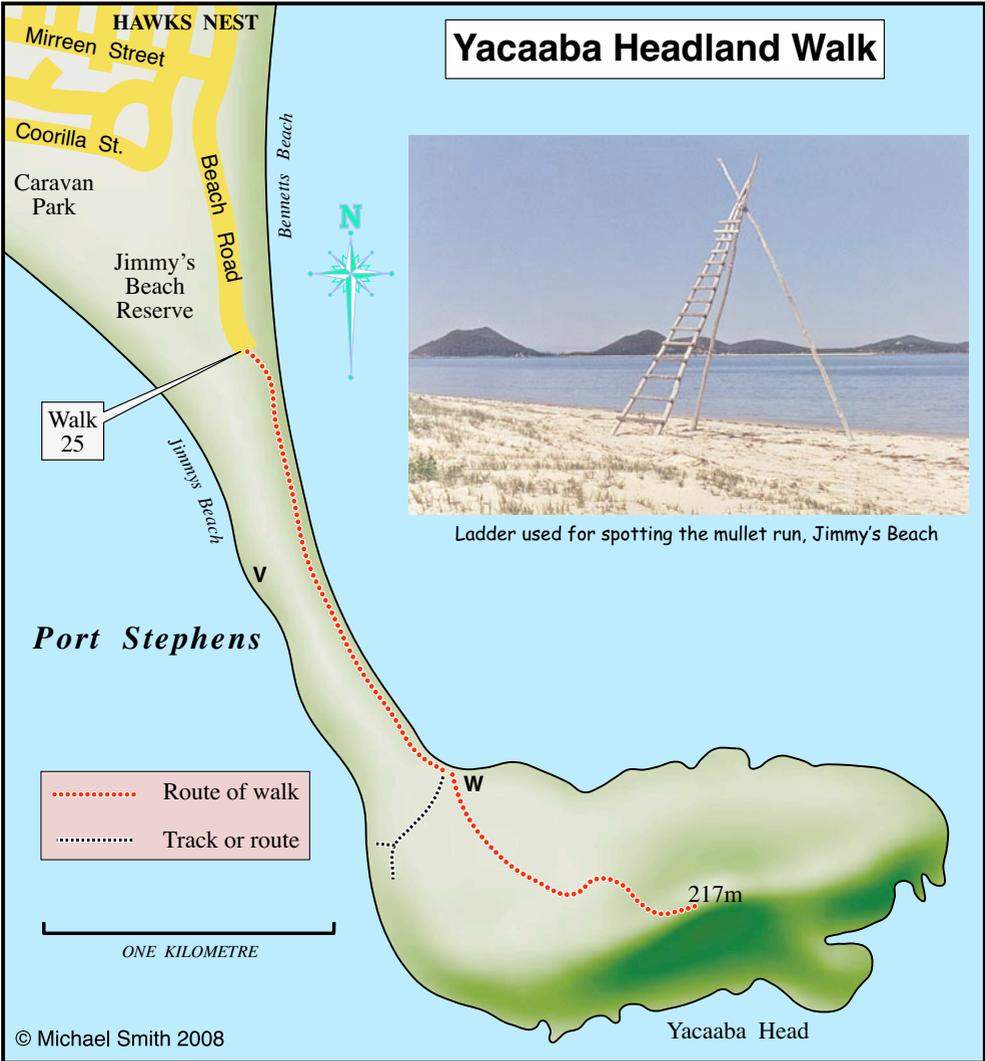
In Tomaree National Park. No wood fires are permitted in the Park. Firearms and domestic pets are not permitted in the Park. All plants, animals, Aboriginal and historic sites, and rock formations within National Parks are protected by law.

You can drive to either Hawks Nest Surf Club or the end of Beach Road. Allow 3-4 hours to complete the walk from here.

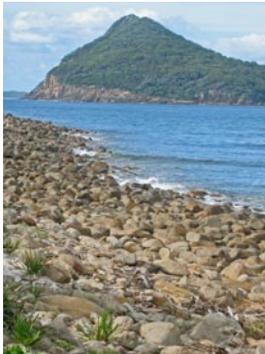
The easiest way to get to Yacaaba is to be dropped off at point **V** on Jimmys Beach by boat. Check with the Visitor Centre to see if any charter boats will do this. You will probably have to disembark into the water on a sandy, weedy bottom. The boat trip is not recommended if the wind is from the south or west or is stronger than 15 knots. Ocean swells are felt on this beach.

Proceed along Jimmys Beach from **V** to the base of Yacaaba, via ‘The Boulders’. Follow the track through the rain forest to **W**. The climb up Yacaaba starts at the north-west base of the peak where the sand meets the rocks. Yacaaba is part of Myall Lakes National Park. Dingos live here.

Yacaaba Headland Walk



Ladder used for spotting the mullet run, Jimmy's Beach



Hawks Nest from Yacaaba



Tomaree from The Boulders



Tomaree from Yacaaba

26

Winda Woppa Walk

Time: 2 hours.

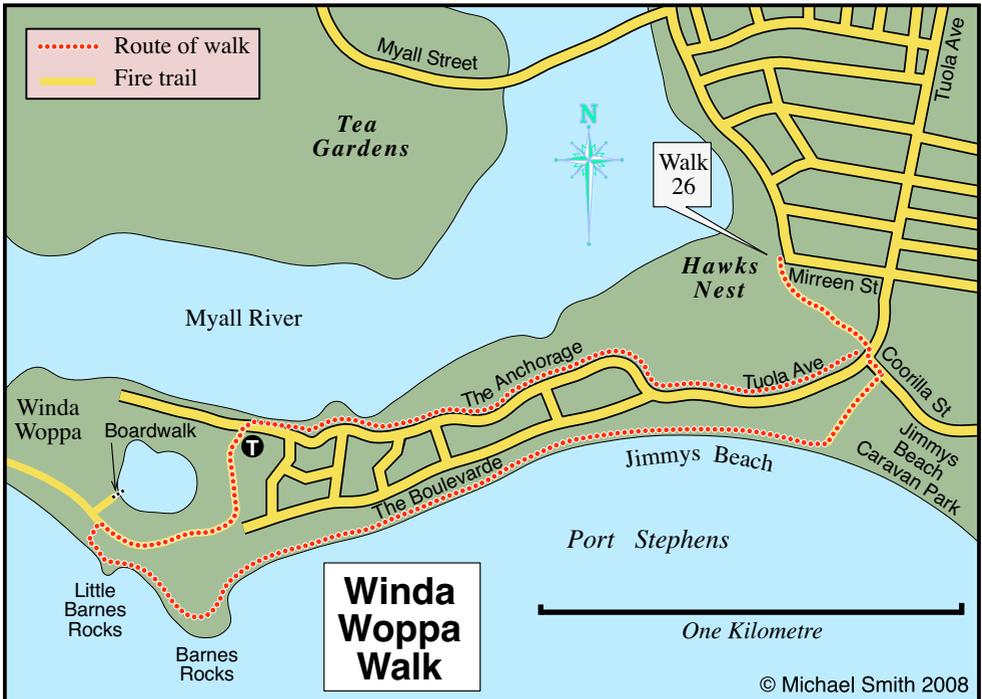
Grade 3: Mostly level walking on formed tracks, roads and a sandy beach, 5 km. This walk is easier at low tide.

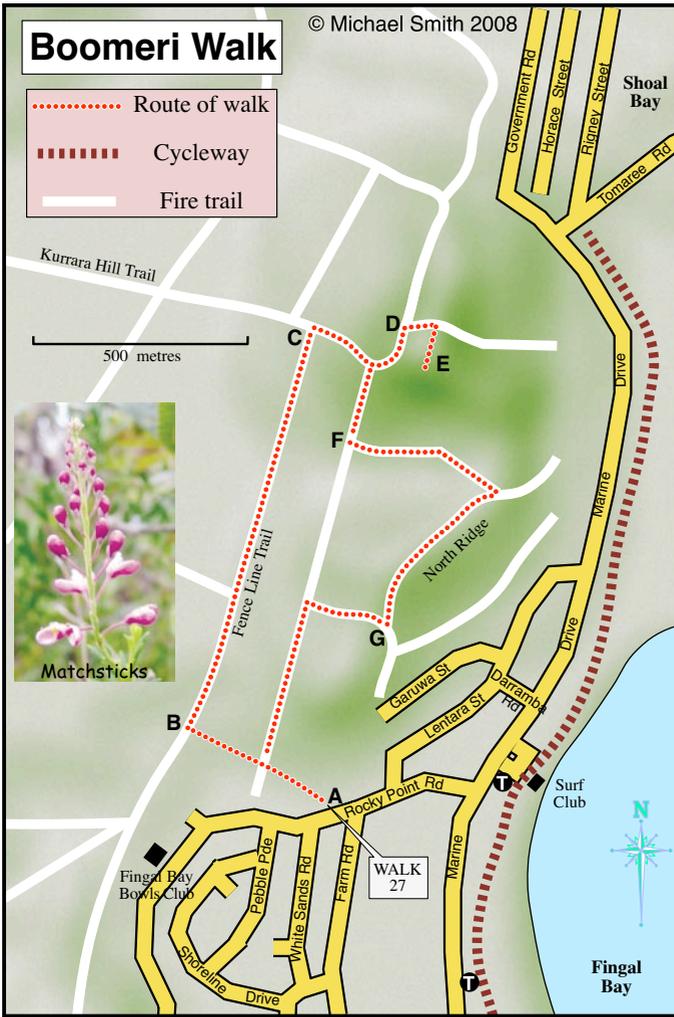
Map: Winda Woppa Walk, page 40.

Features: Coastal heathland, beaches, mangroves, lagoons and a tidal river. Views across Port Stephens extending from Yacaaba, through

Tomaree to Soldiers Point. Swimming and snorkeling are a possibility. The track between Mirreen and Coorilla Streets is particularly rich in 'bush tucker' plants, such as Pine Heath (fruit), Banksia (nectar), Broad-leafed Paperbark (tea and nectar), Native Cherry (fruit), Sour Current Bush (fruit), Scarlet Coral pea (tea), False Sarsaparilla (tea), and Bracken Fern (rhizomes).

Directions: The best place to start this (not signposted) walk is at the bend in Mirreen Street in front of Myall Lodge. Follow the path between the boundary fence and the lagoon. On meeting Tuloa Road, cross it and follow Coorilla Street for 50 metres. You will find here an old access road, on your right, leading to the beach. Follow it and turn right on to Jimmys Beach. Follow the beach around to Barnes Rocks and on to Little Barnes Rocks. A short distance along, look for a track leading off the beach. You will quickly encounter an old vehicle track. Look left for the boardwalk and viewing platform (about 35 metres away), over the water, an interesting side trip. Follow the old road to Winda Woppa Reserve, turn right and follow 'The Anchorage' back to the start.





Epacris, common around Port Stephens

27

Boomeri Walk

Time: 2 hours.

Grade 3: Easy walking on fire trails with a few steep hills to climb. No sign posts, you will need to be confident in reading the map, 4 km.

Map: Boomeri Walk, page 41.

Features: The best and most interesting walk in the water catchment area. Wildflowers at their best. The most diverse orchid display on the Tomaree Peninsula including pixie cap,

greenhood, red beard, brown beak, scented sun, potato, mayfly, spider, donkey, flying duck, pink finger, blue finger, white finger, leek, onion and hyacinth. Grass tree, gymea lily and woody pear abound. Navigation is reasonably simple and there are a few sign posts. Boomeri was the word

used for the grass tree by the Maiangal clan of the Port Stephens Aborigines.

Directions: Commence at the National Park gate, **A**, opposite 95 Rocky Point Road, Fingal Bay. Cross the first big track you come to and continue on to **B**. Turn right on reaching the fence line track which is followed to its end at **C**. Once on the Kurrara Hill trail, walk uphill, swinging around to the left. At point **D** look for the track heading uphill. At the highest point of the hill branch off the track to your right and proceed to the top of this unnamed peak. There is no track but there

are no particular difficulties in making it to the summit. At the top there is an interesting view of the spit and Point Stephens. This is a good place for lunch.

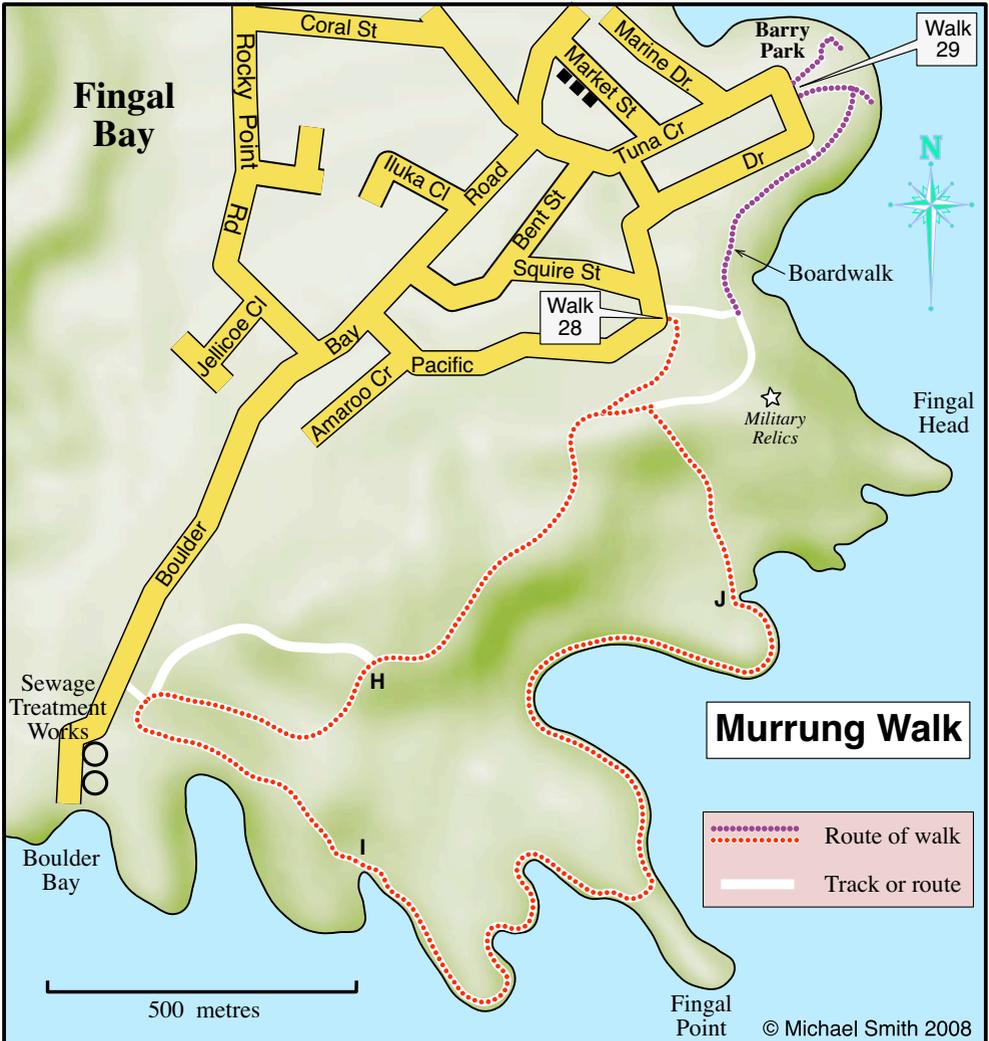
Return downhill and at **F** turn left and climb the ridge which encloses Fingal Bay to the west. At **G** there is a view over Fingal Bay. From **G** a steep downhill track takes you west and then back to the start.



Banksia



On top of the 'unnamed hill' looking towards the spit



Murrung Walk

Time: 2 hours.

Grade 4: Easy walking on fire trails mixed with lots of rock hopping and a few hills to climb. There are times when this track is heavily overgrown. If you find yourself bent over, pushing through the bush, give up and do it later when the track has been cleared again. For the adventurous, 3.5 km.

Map: Murrung walk, page 42.

Features: A grand tour of the best coastal landscapes in Tomaree National Park. The wildflowers August to December are spectacular. Murrung means beautiful in the language (Kutthung) of the Port Stephens' Aborigines. **Directions:** Commence at the intersection of Pacific Drive and Squire Street, Fingal Bay. A track leads uphill into the bush behind the houses in Pacific Drive. This track is always narrow and overgrown, just head uphill to the highest point. A track follows the top of the ridge to point **H** on the map. If you are after a short walk or just came to enjoy the wildflowers, you can return at this point.

From **H** a choice of two tracks takes you downhill towards the Sewage Treatment Works. A 4 wheel drive track takes you to the water's edge at **I**. From here walk around the rocky coastline to **J** where there is a rescue buoy and a memorial to Russell Ionn. Here a fisherman's track leads into the bush, ascending the hill to the ridge-top track and ultimately back to the start.

Barry Park

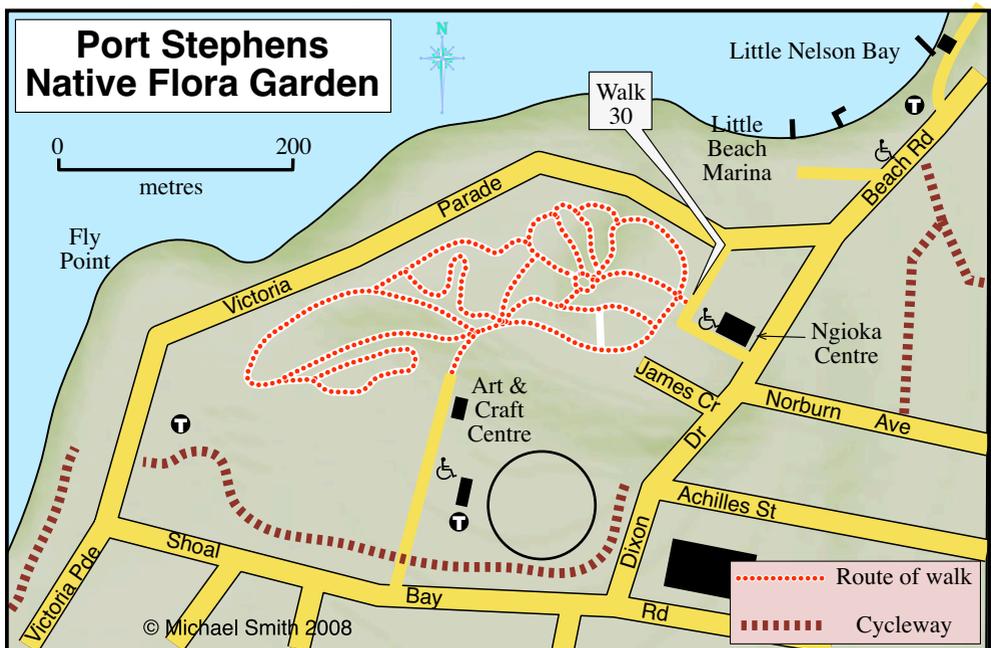
Time: 30 minutes.

Grade 1: Easy walking on bush tracks, 750m.

Map: Murrung Walk, page 42.

Features: Whale watching, coastal views and the chance to explore some rugged bays (optional side trips).

Directions: Barry Park is off Pacific Drive Fingal Bay. The track system is short so explore everything. Start by going down the steps to the rocks.



Native Flora Garden

Time: 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Grade 1: Easy walking on bush tracks, 1 km.

Map: Port Stephens Native Flora Garden, page 43.

Features: Botanical gardens featuring local and Australian native plants. Formal steps and pathways, many plants are named. Bird life is diverse, some water views. There are a number of Aboriginal canoe trees in and around the gardens. A place of beauty. Formerly the site of HMAS Assault from 1942 to 1945. A detailed leaflet is available at the main entrances.

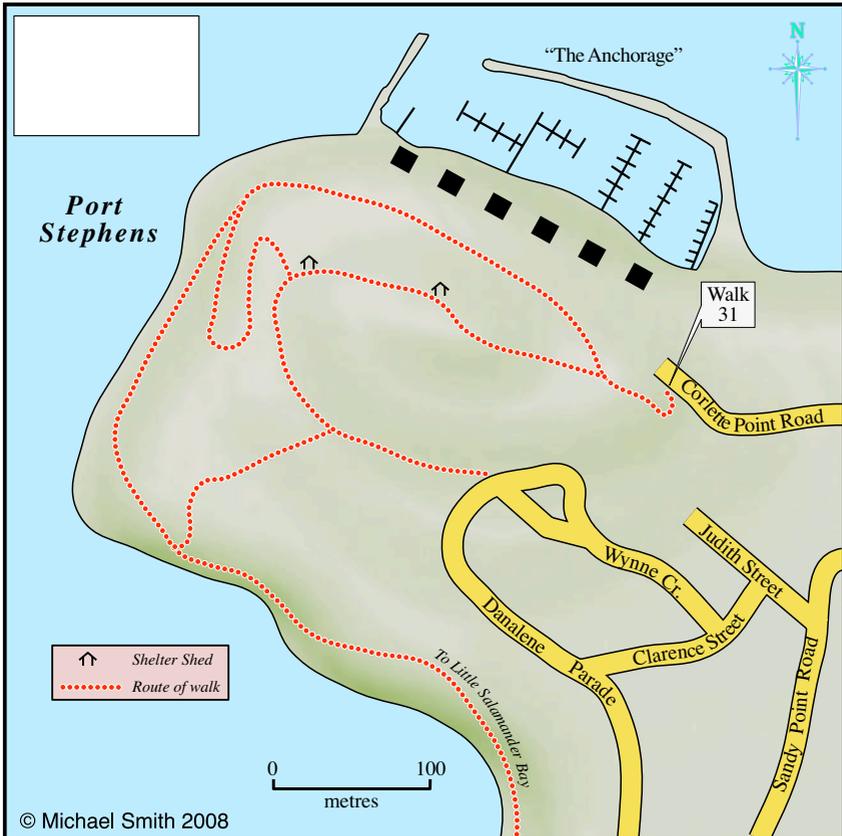
Directions: The best place to enter the gardens is just west of the Ngioka Centre (horticultural therapy centre). The other main entrance is at the top of the hill, north of the

Art and Craft Centre.

This garden site was a defence establishment during World War II. After that it was used as a migrant centre. Wander at will, there is plenty to see, hear and do.



False Sarsaparilla



31

Corlette Headland Walk

Time: 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Grade 2: Easy walking on bush tracks, some steep hills and stairways, 1 km.

Map: Corlette Headland Walk, page 44.

Features: A relatively short walk, but one with lots of surprises. There are cliff-top lookouts over the estuary of Port Stephens, a rainforest reserve and a casual stroll past the mangroves. Virtually every part of the track is shaded by trees which makes it a good summer walk. You can even take a swim over sand in Little Salamander Bay.

The Corlette Headland Walk makes an interesting night walk, particularly in winter. Take a torch and a spotlight and you should see ringtail and brushtail possums, owls, roosting birds, fireflies and after a long spell of rain, luminous fungi.

Directions: This walk starts at the western end of Corlette Point Road, Corlette, near the entrance to The Anchorage Resort.

32

Tilligerry Circuit

Time: 3-4 hours.

Grade 3: Easy walking on bush tracks, parkland, sandy beaches, boardwalks, and lots of rock-hopping around the water's edge. This walk is easiest at low tide, 6.5 to 9 km.

Map: Tilligerry Peninsula, page 46.

Features: This long walk has amazing diversity. Expect to see boats, seabirds, wildflowers, mangroves, koalas, oysters, beaches and forests. There are also Aboriginal shell middens, grinding grooves, a shelter cave and canoe trees.

Directions: If possible try to organize for a car to be left at Caswell Reserve, Mallabula, for the return journey. Start at Mungarra Reserve, Daniel Cr, Lemon Tree Passage. Follow the boardwalk down to the beach. Walk around the waterfront to the shops at Lemon Tree Passage. Beyond Kooinda Park and Rudd Reserve the walk becomes an adventurous rock hop. The walk finishes at Caswell Reserve.

33

Whistling Kite Lookout

Time: 45 minutes.

Grade 2: A steep climb (176 steps) followed by easy walking on sand, bush tracks and fire trails, 2 km return.

Map: Tilligerry Peninsula, page 46.

Features: Views and wildflowers.

Directions: Commence at the end of the cycleway opposite the intersection of Lemon Tree Passage Road and Crawley Avenue, Lemon Tree Passage.

The track climbs a stairway from the road, through masses of acacia, flannel flowers, boronia and grass trees. There is an ever expanding view of Tilligerry Ck, across to Fenningshams Island and to the sandhills of Stockton Bight.

At the sand pit keep left. The main path curves in an S and climbs a little to a field of native grasses. The fire trail continues up hill to the water towers. Return the same way. Other choices here are to take either of the two wide tracks to Mallabula sports complex, passing the old flagstone quarry or walk down the tarred road to LTP Quarry and back to LTP (extra 2km).



Koala
Lemon Tree Passage

Tilligerry Peninsula

Port Stephens



Pelicans
Lemon Tree Passage



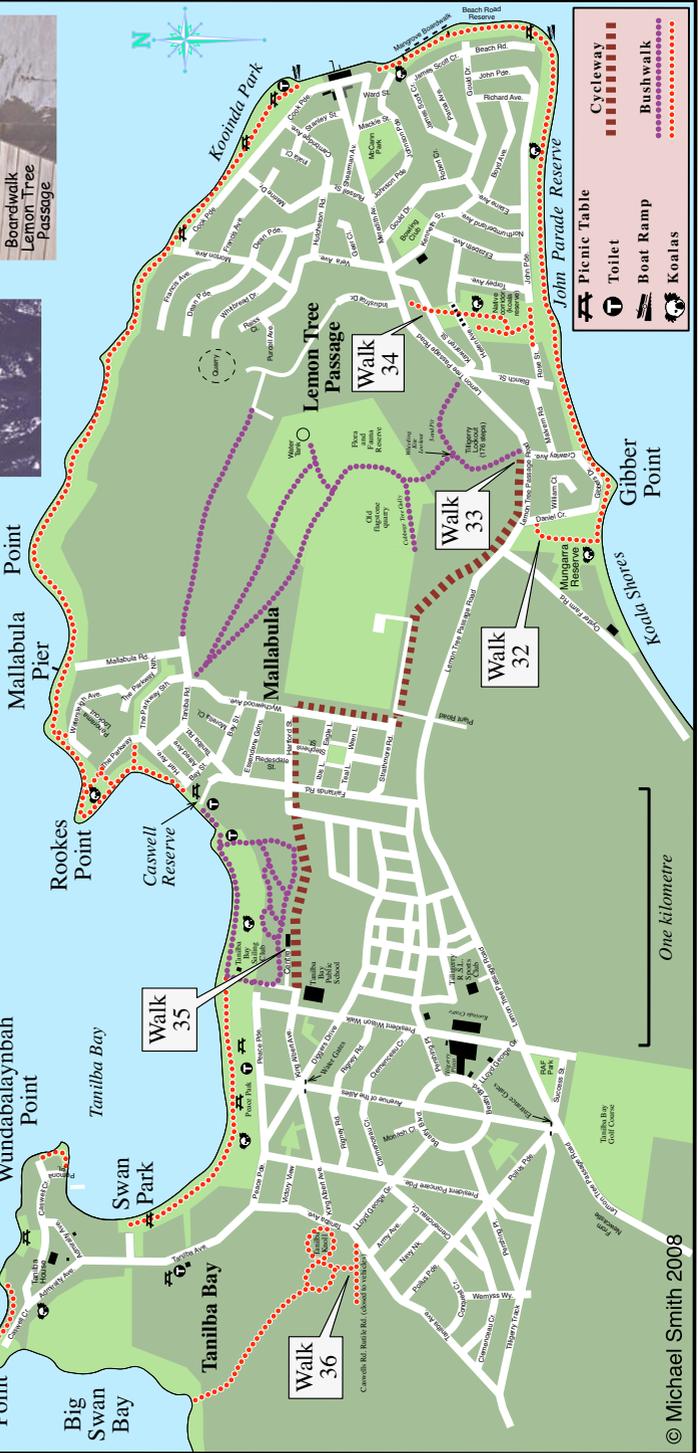
Grass Trees
Tilligerry Habitat



Green Turtle
Point



Boardwalk
Lemon Tree
Passage



© Michael Smith 2008

Helen Avenue Koala Reserve

Time: 30 minutes.

Grade 2: Easy walking on fire trails, boggy after rain, 1 km return.

Map: Tilligerry Peninsula, p 46.

Features: Wildflowers and koalas. A short, easy walk through a native corridor.

Directions: Start at the sign ("Protect our wildlife. Keep your dog on a lead"), in Kawarren Street, Lemon Tree Passage.

Walk in on the Grass tree Track. Turn right along the Helen Avenue Track and at the end of Helen Ave, walk left beside the drain along the Burrawang Track, noting the names of flora on labels in this moister area. Return along the Grass tree Track. Look for koalas.

Tilligerry Habitat Reserve

Time: 40 minutes.

Grade 1: Easy walking on tracks and boardwalks, 2 km return.

Map: Tilligerry Peninsula, p 46.

Features: Walk along a waterfront reserve amongst paper barks, swamp mahogany and ferns. Occasional koalas. Plenty of birds. A brochure is available from the Tilligerry Habitat explaining the features of this walk.

Directions: Start at Tilligerry Habitat straw bale building off King Albert Avenue, Tanilba Bay. Follow the track around the waterfront towards Caswell Reserve. Return along a choice of tracks to the Tilligerry Habitat centre.

Tanilba Knoll

Time: 30 minutes.

Grade 2: Easy walking on sandy, mostly level bush tracks, 1 km.

Map: Tilligerry Peninsula, p 46.

Features: Tall eucalypts, grass trees, flannel

flowers, boronia and ground orchids.

Directions: Start at the western end of Lloyd George Grove, Tanilba Bay.

Walk along the track on the power easement and then walk figure eight across this remnant of the north dune. A walk to Big Swan Bay is possible.

Koalas will rest or seek safety in any tree, but they eat mainly the leaves of Swamp Mahogany, Broad Leafed Paperbark, Blackbutt and Scribbly Gum in this area. Learning to recognise these trees is the first step in finding koalas.

Koala food trees.

Swamp mahogany	(<i>E. robusta</i>)
Bangalay	(<i>E. botryoides</i>)
Small leaf peppermint	(<i>E. nicholii</i>)
Spotted gum	(<i>E. maculata</i>)
Forest red gum	(<i>E. tereticornis</i>)
Tallowood	(<i>E. microcorys</i>)
Grey gum	(<i>E. punctata</i>)
Grey gum	(<i>E. propinqua</i>)
Scribbly gum	(<i>E. haemastoma</i>)
Blackbutt	(<i>E. pilularis</i>)
Lemon scented gum	(<i>E. citriodora</i>)
Willow Gum	(<i>E. scoparia</i>)
Broad leaf paperbark	(<i>M. quinquenervia</i>)

Some creatures that bite ...

TICK. You have an itch. When scratching it you feel that there is something embedded in your skin. There is a red swelling; you have a tick, *Ixodes holomale*. Just pull it out with a pair of tweezers and get on with your life. The red lump will stay hot and itchy for up to 2 weeks. Ticks will sometimes wander over your body for days before attaching. A shower with plenty of soap and shampoo helps wash off the wanderers. It is common for ticks to land on your shirt and wander down inside your shorts, biting you on the waist line. Ticks will attach anywhere on your body, and you may need help to remove them. They are more easily seen on light-colored clothing. Keep exposed skin to the minimum. Avoid sitting on the



ground and brushing past bushes.

Life for the tick starts as one of 3000 eggs laid by the female in January. On hatching, these six legged larval ticks, now the size of a pin head, climb up any available vegetation, hoping to become attached to a passing animal. It is probably a long and fruitless wait for most of them. Those ticks lucky enough to find their first host, dine on its blood for about 4 days, then drop to the ground. This happens around March. On moulting it climbs the vegetation again, this time as an eight-legged nymph in July. If lucky a second time, it will attach to another animal and again drop to the ground after a feast of blood. After shedding its skin, it emerges as an adult and climbs the vegetation again in October for a last, and for some animals, most deadly meal of blood. The male tick is harmless. Tick bites in humans are rarely fatal. About 20 people died last century in NSW from tick poisoning. The venom of the tick is produced in its salivary glands. It acts as an anticoagulant and contains a neurotoxin. Ticks range in size from minute, to 2cm long for an engorged female. The color is brown or blue-grey. Eventually the female lays her eggs in a damp place to renew the life cycle.



SNAKES. Many Australian snakes are venomous. A bite can kill, or make you very ill. The best protection is to watch where you put your feet. Wear stout shoes and strong clothing in country where there may be snakes. Stomp on the ground as you walk through long grass. Don't put your hands in hollow logs or thick grass without looking first. A bite can occur when you tread upon, or touch a retreating or

sleeping snake, which then responds to defend itself. Most snake bites occur when people attempt to kill them.

The chance of dying from snakebite is about 2 million to one. Be prepared by carrying two elastic bandages and a mobile phone.

If bitten by a snake, place a broad constrictive bandage over the site of the bite, firmly applied as you would for a sprained ankle, but not so tight that the blood supply is interfered with. The rest of the limb is then bandaged, at the same pressure, and rather than removing clothing it is better to bandage over the top of clothing. The limb is then immobilised using a splint. The wound should not be washed or cleaned, as this will interfere with the venom detection test. Keep the patient as still as possible. Seek medical help. Transport should be brought to the victim, rather than taking the victim to the transport.

MOSQUITO. Port Stephens has plenty of mosquitos. They will breed in tree hollows, rock pools, ground pools, water tanks, septic tanks, gutters, drains and freshwater swamps. The larvae feed on any minute particle of organic matter, like algae and bacteria. The female of most mosquitos suck blood and the males feed on nectar. Most feed at night when their host is likely to be asleep, or at least unable to see them. Male mosquitos will gather in swarms and emit sounds, making it easier for the female to find them.

One domestic species is *Aedes aegypti* is a proven vector for dengue fever.

Other mosquitos carry malaria, Murray Valley encephalitis, myxomatosis, yellow fever, Ross River fever and filariasis.



The male lives only a few days as a vegetarian. The "blood-thirsty" female can live for eight months. There are 27 species of mosquito living in this area.

Dress in loose-fitting, light-colored clothing and cover exposed skin with insect repellent.

Opposite; scenes from Broughton Island. Penguins, salt crystals, aboriginal axe grinding grooves, 'The Staircase', muttonbird and lichen encrusted rock.

