

Station Street, Seven Hills to Wianamatta Regional Park

TRACK

Distance: 34.0 kilometres

Ascent: 198 metres

Descent: 199 metres

Overview

This trek through the western suburbs of Sydney will come as a surprise to many people who think of the western suburbs of Sydney as hectares of homogeneous housing and acres of industrial buildings. While the terrain is relatively flat and an abundance of shared paths make for easy walking it is the scenery that is the great surprise. From the dense thickets along the creeks to the open remnants of the Cumberland Plains and the reminders of farming and grazing that existed here only a few years ago. It is often hard to believe that you are still in the suburbs of Australia's largest city.

The walking route winds along Toongabbie and Blacktown Creek and there are more surprises with patches of shady regenerated bushland that provides shelter for the bellbirds chiming away in the scrub and the water hens strutting along the creek banks. You encounter large flood basins along this creek system, mute testimony to the punishing floods that once even inundated the centre of Parramatta. At Blacktown the regeneration of the old showground and Francis Park Oval has produced one of the most imaginative parks in Sydney that has become a focal point for families in the surrounding suburbs. Beyond Blacktown, the route winds along Breakfast Creek to the Western Sydney Parklands. This enormous 5,280 hectare park runs from Quakers Hill to Hoxton Park and contains the 27 kilometre Parklands Track which you follow for 7 kilometres from Quakers Hill Parkway to the wonderful Nurragingy Reserve with its ornamental lake and beautiful Chinese Garden, one of the best in the Southern Hemisphere. Along the way there are patches of Cumberland Plain woodland, Eastern Creek floodplains and wide, open grasslands. Another short stretch through the Western Sydney Parklands takes you past Blacktown International Sports Centre and across the M7 Freeway to the top of Rooty Hill (yes, there is a hill) where you are rewarded with an unexpected panorama of the Blue Mountains from the Blue Labyrinth to Kurrajong Heights. Below Rooty Hill there are few traces of the Government Stock Farmhouse that once existed here but some of the paddocks remain.

From Rooty Hill, the Great West Walk follows paths and easements through to the Great Western Highway. Along the park on the northern side of this busy road there are still surprising colonial remnants such as "Neoblie" and the original Colyton Schoolmaster's Cottage. At Waterholes Reserve (once a major watering pint for stock and people on their way across the Blue Mountains) the route heads north-west along Ropes Creek through open parklands, playing fields and woodlands to the new suburb of Ropes Crossing built on the site of Australia's largest munitions complex. There is a delightful series of paths through local parks including an excellent re-creation of Ropes Crossing Station where thousands of munitions workers poured out into the complex of buildings and bunkers that existed here during World War II. Part of this huge site is now occupied by Wianamatta Regional Park and the Great West Walk wanders through the Eastern Visitors Precinct to cross Ropes Creek and South Creek on new footbridges built on the remains of the old wartime vehicle bridges. Wianamatta houses one of the last

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remaining stands of Cumberland Woodland and, amazingly, a large population of kangaroos and emus! Wandering through this vast woodland you could be a thousand miles from civilisation although there are occasional remnants of its past with an old barbed wire fence that reminds you of the fences around POW camps in World War II. However this fence was probably built to keep people out rather than in! Much of the central section of the park is covered with forest regrowth and in a few years all traces of the munitions factories there will disappear. Who knew that a walk through Blacktown City would have so many surprises!

Public Transport

The Great West Walk has been designed to make it very accessible by public transport and there are regular transport connections along the walking route:-

- **Parramatta.** The Great West Walk starts at the northern railway exit onto Darcy Street.
- **Seven Hills.** The Great West Walk runs across the pedestrian bridge over Seven Hills station.
- **Blacktown.** The Great West Walk runs across the pedestrian bridge over the Windsor Line station to the bus interchange.
- **Doonside.** The Great West Walk runs through Nurragingy Reserve which is a kilometre west of the station along Cross Street.
- **Rooty Hill.** The Great West Walk runs to and from this station along Rooty Hill Road South.
- **Marayong.** The Great West Walk is 800 metres from this station as it crosses Davis Road just south of the Davis Road Bridge over Toongabbie Creek.

Buses run to and from Blacktown Station to the walking route. Take the Western Line train from Central to Blacktown and then:-

- **Davis Road, Marayong.** Take the 752 bus from Blacktown Bus Interchange Stand 4 and alight at bus stop 214812 on Davis Road near Crudge Road. Walk north 200 metres to the walk/cycle path on the western side of Davis Road just before the bridge over Breakfast Creek. The Great West Walk runs west along this path.
- **Richmond Road, Quakers Hill.** Take the 753 bus from Blacktown Bus Interchange Stand 3 and alight at bus stop 276748 on Richmond Road near Hill End Road. Walk west along Richmond Road for 250 metres to cross Quakers Hill Parkway at the traffic lights then walk 120 metres to the Parklands Track entry **GPS0263464348**. The Great West Walk runs south along this path.
- **Power Street, Doonside.** Take the 756 bus from Blacktown Bus Interchange Stand 3 and alight at bus stop 2761145 on Power Road near Kildo Crescent. Walk east 450 metres along Power Street to the Parklands Track entry **GPS0168363022**. The Great West Walk runs south along this path.
- **May Cowpe Reserve.** Take the 728 bus from Blacktown Station Bus Interchange Stand E and alight at bus stop 27766168 in Rupertswood Road opposite Minchinbury Anglican Church, The walking route crosses Rupertswood Road to Bainbridge Crescent 230 metres north of the bus stop.

Buses run to and from Mt Druitt Bus Interchange. Take the Western Train Line from Central to Mt Druitt and then walk to the bus interchange on the northern side of the station:-

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- **Waterholes Reserve.** Take the 770 or 771 bus from Mt Druitt Bus Interchange Stand H and alight at bus stop 2770595 on the Great Western Highway opposite Mt Druitt Road. The Great West Walk runs along the reserve on the northern side of the highway.
- **Ropes Crossing.** Take the 780 bus from Mt Druitt Bus Interchange Stand 6 and alight at bus stop 2760266 in Hollows Parade outside Ropes Crossing Shopping Centre. The Great West Walk runs along Ropes Crossing Boulevard 70 metres west of the bus stop.

Return

Return to the city via the same train and/or bus service. Use the bus stop opposite the stops listed above.

Vehicle Access

It is also very easy to walk this section using two vehicles or one vehicle and public transport. Convenient access points are set out below. Sydway map references are page number and grid square; Satnav is the address that you enter into your Satnav device (e.g. Tom Tom, Navman, Garmin etc.); GPS Co-ordinates is the 10 digit grid reference shown on your GPS (e.g. Garmin, Navman):-

| Access Point | Sydway | Satnav address | GPS Coordinates |
|--|-------------|--|------------------|
| Seven Hills Station | Map 231 C18 | Seven Hills Carpark, Terminus Road, Seven Hills | 56HLH08894 60930 |
| Blacktown Station | Map 230 J15 | 42 First Ave, Blacktown | 56HLH06304 61620 |
| Davis Road Bridge | Map 230 E8 | 36 Davis Road, Marayong | 56HLH05249 63382 |
| Richmond Rd & Quakers Hill Pkwy | Map 229 L4 | 479 Richmond Road, Quakers Hill | 56HLH02634 64348 |
| Colebee Centre, Nurragingy Reserve | Map 229 G13 | 41 Knox Road, Doonside | 56HLH01806 62128 |
| Rooty Hill station | Map 229 B17 | Rooty Hill Station | 56HLH0040461059 |
| Rupertswood Road | Map 228 M20 | 94 Rupertswood Road, Rooty Hill | 56HKH99084 60232 |
| Waterholes Reserve | Map 228 D20 | Mt Druitt Park, Great Western Highway, Mt Druitt | 56HKH97070 60350 |
| Forrester Road, Ropes Crossing | Map 227 M4 | Lot 5 Susannah Drive, Ropes Crossing | 56HKH94830 64421 |
| Ropes Crossing Shopping Centre | Map 207 K20 | 8 Central Place, Ropes Crossing | 56HKH94391 65348 |
| Wianamatta Regional Park (East Precinct) | Map 207 H17 | Mainwaring Street, Ropes Crossing | 56HKH9409 666041 |

Note that the only parking near Parramatta Station is commercial car parks and that parking near Seven Hills Station, Blacktown Station may be difficult on weekdays but there is a large carpark at both these locations. Parking is easier on the southern side of Rooty Hill Station. Parking elsewhere is reasonable.

Food and Drink

- **Seven Hills.** There are several cafes and a supermarket on the southern side of Seven Hills Station as well as a Centro Shopping Centre west of Prospect Highway.

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- **Blacktown.** There is another large shopping centre located on the southern side of the station.
- **Blacktown Showground Precinct.** There is a café open on weekends and some weekdays.
- **Marayong.** This small shopping centre is 900 metres north of the Great West Walk along the Marayong Station Link (see Chapter 7). It has a small supermarket, chemist, newsagent, post office and a couple of takeaways.
- **Nurragingy Reserve.** There is a kiosk open every day at the Colebee Centre.
- **Rooty Hill.** There is a tavern on the corner of Manis Street and Rooty Hill Road South that has a bistro. On the southern side of the station there is an IGA supermarket, several cafes (Chinese, Indian, Filipino) and a couple of takeaways while a larger shopping centre is located north of the station.
- **Minchinbury.** There is a McDonalds and a Subway on the southern side of the Great Western Highway opposite Mt Druitt Road. There are pedestrian lights at the junction of John Hines Avenue and the highway just to the west of Mt Druitt Road to reach these fast food outlets.
- **Ropes Crossing.** There are 3 cafes, a supermarket pharmacy and medical centre at Ropes Crossing.

Accommodation

There are numerous accommodation alternatives along the walking route from Seven Hills to Ropes Crossing:-

Blacktown

There is one motel and one B&B at Blacktown. There are two premium hotels nearby but they would require a taxi ride. The best place to obtain information on this accommodation is from www.blacktownaustralia.com.au.

Glendenning

The Plumpton Hotel has a motel section with 21 rooms. The hotel is 750 metres from the Great West Walk as it follows the Western Sydney Parklands Track across Richmond Road.

Plumpton Hotel 556 Richmond Road Glendenning 2761

Phone: (02) 9626 9766

Web: www.plumptonhotel.com.au

Rooty Hill

There is one premium hotel/motel at Rooty Hill RSL 800 metres north of the walking route along Francis Road:-

Rooty Hill Novotel. 33 Railway Street, Rooty Hill

Phone: (02) 9832 3888

Web: accorhotels.com

Colyton

This suburban hotel has a motel section with 31 rooms. It is 600 metres west of the Great West Walk as it runs along Simpsons Hill Road near The Waterholes at Mt Druitt Park

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Colyton Hotel 12 Great Western Highway Colyton NSW 2760
 Email: colyton.hotel@alhgroup.com.au

Phone: (02) 9623 226602
 Web: www.colytonhotel.com.au

Planning Map

Parramatta to Rooty Hill

Transport

B = Bus
 F = Ferry
 TR = Train
 V = Vehicle access

Accommodation

C = Caravan Park
 BP = Backpackers
 O = Other accommodation

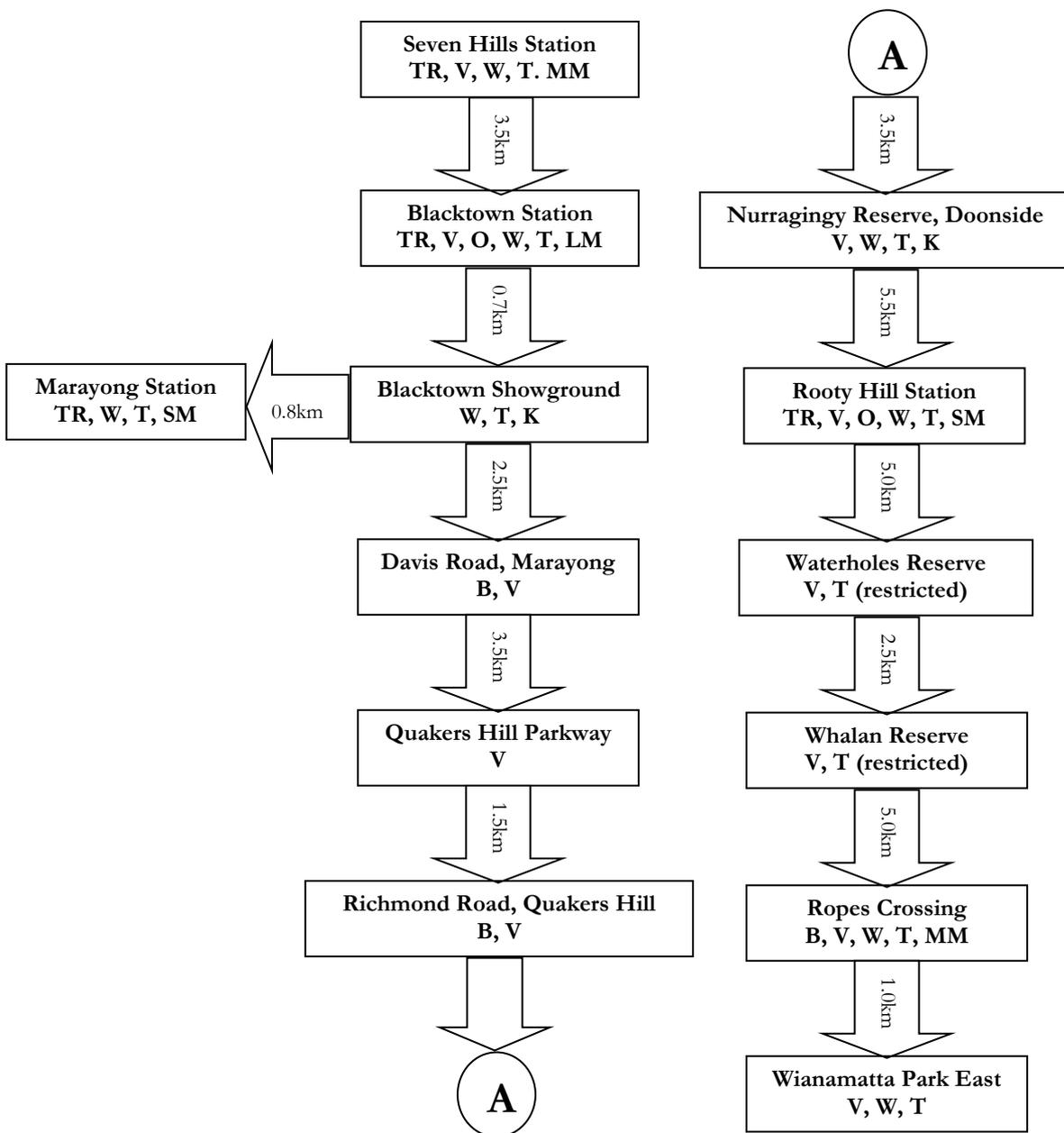
Water, toilets

W = Water
 T = Toilet

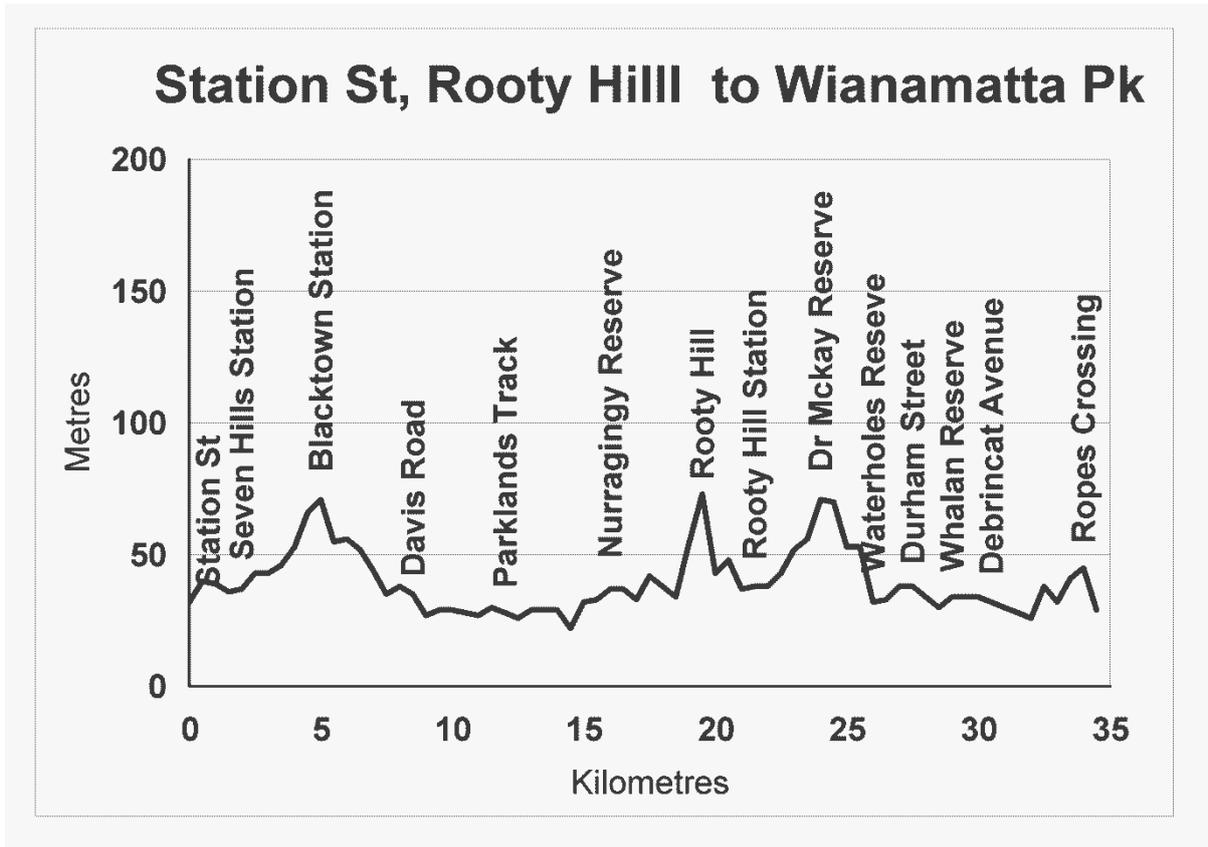
Food, drink

K = Kiosk, café
 KS = Kiosk (summer only)
 SM = Small shopping centre
 MM = Medium shopping centre
 LM = Large shopping centre

NOTE: Times do not include rest breaks or lunch breaks. These must be added



Ascent/Descent Profile



Track Grade

This section is graded 0 (well defined foot tracks, fire tracks or road, level to moderately steep terrain. Minimal navigational difficulties in any weather conditions). The Track varies from concrete and bitumen walk/cycle paths and footpaths to foot pads and occasional cross-country walks across parks and reserves.

Water & Toilets

Town water and toilets are not frequent along this route but they are available at:-

- NOT IN BLACKTOWN?Seven Hills Station.
- International Peace Park, Seven Hills (these may only be open during games).
- Blacktown Netball Complex (only open when games are being played).
- Blacktown Railway Station
- Blacktown Showgrounds Precinct
- Marayong Park, Davis Road Marayong (may only be open during games).

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- Harvey Park, Marayong (may only be open during games).
- Nurrangy Reserve. There is water in the toilets and also taps near the picnic tables
- Charlie Bali Reserve, Doonside (may only be open during games).
- Blacktown City Soccer Club, Eastern Road Doonside (only open during games).
- Rooty Hill Station.
- Dr Charles Mackay Reserve (water fountain only)
- Waterholes Reserve (only open during games).
- Whalan Reserve. The toilets are only open when games are being played but there is a tap on the outside of the changing sheds near the path.
- Ropes Crossing Shopping Centre. There are toilets in the supermarket.
- Wianamatta Regional Park. There are toilets near the entrance and at the picnic area in Kangaroo Clearing.

Under no circumstances should you use water from the Parramatta River or any of the creeks you cross as they are all highly polluted and probably contain toxins that will not be removed by filtering or boiling.

Indigenous History

SHOULD BE CHECKED WITH BLACKTOWN CC ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP

The Aboriginal people of the Western Cumberland Plain referred to themselves as the Darug (also spelt as Dharug, Daruk, Dharuk and Dharruk) and their language is Dharug and some of their sites have been dated back 20,000 years. The language group was split into numerous clans, each belonging to a different geographical area although there appears to have been significant overlap of territories, especially location where there was a seasonal surplus of food resources.

The Toongagal clan belonged to the area along Toongabbie and Greystanes Creek while further south around Prospect Creek (now Prospect Reservoir) was the Warmuli clan and to the west at Eastern Creek was the Warrawarry clan. These waterways provided plenty of food - mullet, eels, platypus, yabbies, tortoises and freshwater mussels. The creeks were surrounded by forests that provided possums, birds, rats, bandicoots, snakes, lizards and wallabies while emus thrived in the open country. Women and children collected yams, roots, fruits, berries, fern roots and honey from the rich soil of the creek flats. Because most food was located in or near these creeks their summer camp sites were located near the creeks and the archaeological evidence of these sites has been washed away by flooding.

The Gomerrigal-tongarra clan belonged to the area around South Creek and Ropes Creek. These waterways were an important resource that provided plenty of food - mullet, eels, platypus, yabbies, tortoises and freshwater mussels. The creeks were surrounded by forests that provided possums, birds, rats, bandicoots, snakes, lizards and wallabies while emus thrived in the open country. Women and children collected yams, roots, fruits, berries, fern roots and honey from the rich soil of the creek flats. The confluence of South Creek and Ropes Creek was an important place for this clan as they made spear points from the red silcrete in the ridges nearby. The Black She-Oak *Casuarina glauca* that grows along these creeks has special significance to the local Aboriginal people. They were called She-Oak as the Gomerrigal referred to them as the 'woman's tree'. As very little grows underneath these trees, it was a safe place for the children to play as snakes would avoid travelling over the fallen branches and the fallen needles made a comfortable spot for the women to meet and discuss the day's happenings. The wood from these trees was also used to make a variety of tools.

The impact of white settlement resulted in displacement of these clans and numbers dropped dramatically. Some of the Darug that survived were taught to farm at a school established in 1814 by Governor Macquarie at Parramatta. In 1819 Governor Macquarie gave a

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land grant of 30 hectares to Colebee and Nurragingy in the Plumpton area near the intersection of Rooty Hill Road and Richmond Road however only Colebee's name appeared on the grant. In 1823 a "Native Institute" was built near these grants and this institute and the surrounding grants became known as "Blacks' Town". Meanwhile residents at Parramatta were complaining about the Aborigines living near them, so the school was moved to the Native Institute at "Blacks' Town" in 1832 but ten years later it was abandoned. However the road leading to the institute remained as "Blacktown Road" (later Richmond Road) and this road gave its name to the City of Blacktown. Even today Blacktown has the largest Aboriginal population in the state.

In 1834 Governor Burke introduced an annual feast and issue of blankets at Parramatta. This provided a census of sorts and the 1834 returns record people from Duck River "Watergoro tribe", Prospect, Kissing Point and Breakfast Creek. The 1837 returns include members of 'tribes' from Duck River, Concord, Prospect ("Weymaly tribe" probably Warmuli clan), Eastern Creek ("Warrawarry tribe"), South Creek and one person from Georges River. The 1839 returns comprise mainly Warmuli and Warrawarry people giving their place of residence as Bungarabee (Eastern Creek) and Bungarabee Creek in Doonside and Rooty Hill). By 1840 the Warmuli and Warrawarry people were living at Eastern and South Creeks, although several individuals were back in the Prospect area. By 1841 most Weymaly were at Prospect, while the Warrawarry remained at Eastern Creek. The 1843 issue of blankets at Parramatta was also attended by people from Berrima, Bong Bong, Cowpastures and Liverpool. A noticeable feature of the blanket returns after 1837 is the disappearance of Aboriginal recipients from Kissing Point, Duck River and

Highlights

SEVEN HILLS

Early European settlement in this area was well north of the present station and shopping centre around Old Windsor Road. The first land grant of 60 acres was made to John Redmond in 1793. Within a few years other portions of the heavily forested land were granted to ex-convicts, emancipists, retired soldiers and a handful of free settlers. Among these was Andrew Hamilton Hume who arrived in the colony in 1790 and in 1797 his son, the famous explorer Hamilton Hume was born in Seven Hills. By 1800 the name Seven Hills had been given to the area on either side of the recent built Hawkesbury Road (Old Windsor Road) in recognition of the seven hills along the Hawkesbury Road between Westmead and Bella Vista (Northwest Boulevard). In 1819 Governor Macquarie granted away part of Prospect Common and the name Seven Hills now extended to these grants.

John Macarthur bought 1770 acres of land in this northern area in 1801 (below Norwest Business Park) and this farm became part of his infamous 1821 land swap for better grazing land at Camden. Although grain was grown originally by the 1830s the ill-suited English farming practices had rendered much of the land infertile and the area converted to fruit-growing which was better suited to the shale soils. By the 1860s orchards, especially citrus and stone fruit, covered much of the area. With the advent of the railway in 1860 the orchards prospered as fruit could be transported to market quickly. It was at this time that the Seven Hills Name transferred to the railway station. Over time these orchards consolidated and one of the largest was "Bella Vista" situated on a large portion of what had been Macarthur's sheep farm and this house is still standing in Bella Vista Farm Park with its magnificent row of Bunya pines. In the early 1900s these farms became a tourist attraction in spring with hundreds of people travelling by train to the area to admire the masses of pink and white blossoms. However, the opening of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area in the 1920s led to the decline of the fruit-growing industry and the rise of poultry and dairy farms. In 1906 Grantham Stud Poultry Farm was established on 48 hectares and in 1917 a Soldier Settlement Scheme was established with much of the Grantham

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Farm sub-divide into 2 hectare lots for invalid soldier settlers but this was unsuccessful so in 1923 the remaining 17 hectares of Grantham became the Government Poultry Farm to conduct research into the poultry industry. By 1939 this became the Poultry Experiment Farm and in 1947 research at this establishment solved a serious hatchability problem throughout the state and became instrumental in developing the Australian chicken meat industry. After many years, numerous name changes and great research success, the Seven Hills Agricultural Station was closed in the early 1990s.

Between the two World Wars larger properties were sub-divided into smaller holdings for market gardens, poultry farms and some housing but in 1945 the New South Wales Housing Commission resumed large tracts of land and began building houses on the southern side of the railway line and by the mid-1950 the population had increased ten-fold. The electrification of the western railway in 1955 attracted more people and industry to the district and Seven Hills ceased to be a rural community and became part of Sydney's ever-increasing urban sprawl.

BLACKTOWN WAR MEMORIAL POOL & GARDEN

This small park houses a memorial to all the National Servicemen who died during the Vietnam War as well as a memorial to the local servicemen who died on service. The Blacktown War Memorial Swimming Pool was originally built by Blacktown RSL in the 1950s and has served the community for 60 years. In more recent years its name was changed to Blacktown Aquatic Centre and the Returned Services League established this Memorial Gardens next to the pool.

BLACKTOWN SALE YARDS

Blacktown Sale Yards opened on May 8, 1907 in the area which is today's bus interchange. The yards were built by the stock agents, Thompson and Hardman and were only just finished on the morning of their opening by the Shire President. They offered "... *free agistment for stock day before sale ...*" and "*Good grass and water in paddocks connected with the yards.*" We can only surmise that these paddocks were on the western side of the yards where the Blacktown Showground Precinct lies today. However, the sale yards were not a success and Blacktown Timber Mill built a sawmill on the site. This mill burnt down in 1919 as the nearest fire brigade at Parramatta arrived too late to save it! In 1995 the area became the bus interchange for the new station development.

BLACKTOWN

Known to the Dharug as *Boongarrunbee* this busy suburban city is now the centre of the Blacktown district but it was not always so. In 1791 Governor Phillip granted land to 13 people at Prospect Hill to the 5.5 kilometres south of Blacktown and by 1800 the population in the surrounding district had grown to 16. In 1804 there was uproar in these outlying western settlements of the colony when Irish convicts rebelled and were put down in the Battle of Vinegar Hill. In 1841 St Bartholomew's Church was opened north of Prospect Hill and a small settlement emerged there on the Great Western Highway (now Reservoir Road). Meanwhile the Native Institute known as "Black Town" was opened in 1823 at present-day Plumpton but closed in 1833. However, it gave its name to the road that ran from the Great Western Highway to the Institute. This road (now Richmond Road between Plumpton and Blacktown) gave its name to the station that was built in 1860 where Black's Town Road crossed the railway - Black Town Road Station - as there was no settlement there at that time. A year later the first hotel, the

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Blacktown Hotel (later the Royal Hotel), was opened on the northern side of the railway and was soon providing refreshments to railway workers and local farmers.

As soon as the station was opened the original land grants north of Prospect Hill around the new station were sub-divided and the ironbark forest began to disappear with several timber mills near the station supplying sleepers for the Western, Southern and Northern railways. In 1862 the first post and telegraph office was opened at the station and it is recorded as Blacktown rather than Blacktown Road. Two years later a branch railway line was built from Blacktown to Richmond and slowly the township began to emerge with the first butcher shop in 1872, Christ Church in 1876 and Blacktown Public School in 1877 several years after schools were opened at Prospect and Rooty Hill. The township continued to grow after the Western Line was duplicated in 1886 and in 1892 St Patricks Church was opened but the district was still rural. However in 1906 the Shire of Blacktown was created but the first meeting was not in Blacktown but in the larger township of Rooty Hill. However, by 1912 the first Council Chambers were opened and by 1914 the population of the shire had grown to 6,000. That year the Royal Hotel which had been built on the northern side of the railway in 1861 was turn down and a new Royal Hotel built on the southern side of the station. From that time all commercial development was on the south side of the station and only a timber mill remained on the northern side.

The banks opened in the 1920s and in 1922 the first cinema outside Sydney and Parramatta was opened. It seated 520 and had its own power generator and ice cream making machine. Between the two wars, Blacktown was a small, self-contained farming community. Its economy was based on market gardening and the raising of cattle, chickens and eggs. The only public servants were those employed in the school, post office, council, or on the railway. The shire council administered local government and in a town this size, everybody knew everybody. In 1930 the growing township was connected to the electricity supply and three years later the population reached 13,000.

After World War II during the 1940s and 1950s Blacktown experienced massive growth caused by the post-war baby boom and the immigration of thousands of people from the United Kingdom and Europe. Many of these New Australians settled in Blacktown which soon became an outer suburb of Sydney. The immigrants changed Blacktown forever with the introduction of a continental delicatessen and midweek screenings of Greek and Italian films in the Warrick Theatre which replaced the Rivoli which burnt down in 1946. The Lowy Westfield empire started in Blacktown in the early 1950s when Frank Lowy and his partner, John Saunders opened a delicatessen opposite the railway station and began to buy land for housing. In 1955 the Western Line to Blacktown was electrified and Blacktown now became a commuter suburb rather than a country town as did other townships in the shire. Lowy and Saunders opened the first Westfield Shopping Centre in 1959 with 12 specialty shops and a Winns Department Store, fronted by a landscaped courtyard and side car park. The development was based on the US shopping mall concept that proved spectacularly successful in Australia.

In 1973, the Westpoint Shopping Centre opened which was soon followed by the cinema complex. By 1975 the shire population had grown to 165,000 even though the shire had been reduced in size. Four years later Blacktown became a city and in 1995 a new Railway Station and Bus Interchange were opened. In 2003 Westpoint was extended to cover the entire block and most of the original Westfield Shopping Centre disappeared. New cultural, leisure and sports facilities were opened in the 2000s and the construction of the M7 Freeway gave the population a further boost and it is now in excess of 210,000 people.

BLACKTOWN SHOWGROUND PRECINCT

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This 17.6 ha area has been re-developed at a cost of \$1.6 million and was built on the site of an old football oval (Francis Park) and part of the old Blacktown Showground much of which has been preserved. The Showground still hosts the Blacktown Agricultural Society's Annual Show which has been held here since 1920. It is a truly extraordinary park that has a walk/cycle path; outdoor courts for netball, basketball and futsal; extensive and imaginative playgrounds; water playground; café; public toilets, numerous, shaded picnic facilities and car parking. It houses the Blacktown Council Nursery, a large show ring, a woodlands park, an excellent wetland with boardwalk and a community garden.

However the real genius of this excellent precinct is not readily apparent. Before the construction of the park the showground consumed 6.7 megalitres of water every year while Ashlar Creek that ran through the centre of the site was regularly inundated with storm surges, causing significant erosion with large tonnages of sediment carried downstream. The creek was also heavily polluted and carried high levels of oils, heavy metals and litter. Re-development of the first stage of the precinct began in 2011 and was completed in 2013. An integrated stormwater harvesting system was installed with a gross pollutant trap; on-site stormwater detention tanks and basins; a bio-retention basin that filters stormwater; a diversion structure that directs stormwater from the catchment and detention basins into the treatment system; and large water storage tanks located under the central plaza. The creek line was re-vegetated and banks stabilised to reduce erosion while water from the carparks is drained into three rain gardens. The water harvested is used for irrigation and toilet flushing with a saving of 2.9 megalitres of water per annum. One of the unexpected outcomes has been the rapid colonisation of the artificial wetlands by seven species of water birds while the stabilisation and re-generation of the creek has seen a huge reduction in sediment movement during heavy rain events.

The council's planning indicated a need for public space in the area and previously the site saw little community traffic during the week or outside of specific events. The Showground now receives very heavy community use every day of the week and the future second stage of re-development includes an 800 m² theatre with rehearsal and recording facilities, studios and galleries as well as an events centre with large function rooms, an arena and large open spaces to accommodate multipurpose outdoor performance spaces.

For walkers it provides a great spot for a break with six barbecues, 26 picnic tables and four shelter sheds while the Reflections Café is open Thursday to Monday, 8am – 4pm.

WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS

This 5,280 hectares park will be the largest urban park in Australia and one of the largest in the world. The New South Wales government has spent over \$400 million in acquiring the land and establishing the Western Sydney Parklands Trust and another \$75 million in developing the park. The park runs for 27 kilometres from Quakers Hill in the north to Horningsea Park in the south. The Parklands contains the headwaters of Eastern Creek, a tributary of the Nepean River while the north-south ridge within the Parklands is the boundary between the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, Georges River and Parramatta River catchments.

Unlike more traditional parks Western Sydney Parklands encompasses a diverse range of activities and recreation facilities including:

- Nurraging Reserve (managed by Blacktown City Council)
- Blacktown International Sports Ground (managed by Blacktown City council)
- Bungarribee Regional Park
- Eastern Creek International Raceway
- Prospect Nature Reserve
- Western Sydney International Dragway

- Fairfield City Farm
- Sydney International Equestrian Centre
- Western Sydney Regional Park
- Sydney International Shooting Centre
- Kemps Creek Nature Reserve

Much of the land is still to be developed as parklands but the Parklands Track - a walk/cycle path - has been built along the full length of the Parklands. Around 40 percent of the Parklands is still in interim land uses such as rural residential or vacant land and one of the long-term objectives of the Trust is to maintain urban farming and continue commercial recreational activities (e.g. Eastern Creek Raceway) that generate funds for further development of more formal parks and re-generation of environmental areas.

The Parklands contains patches of Cumberland Plains Woodland that contain threatened and endangered native species and conservation of these areas and species is another objective of the Trust. These areas also contain many indigenous artefact sites, especially along the margins of the freshwater creeks that run through the Parklands. There are also numerous European historic sites such as market gardens and former military sites while major infrastructure such as Prospect Reservoir, major power lines, gas pipelines and the M7 Motorway are located in or alongside the Parklands.

Greater Western Sydney is currently home to 1.8 million people and is one of Australia's fastest growing regions. The Parklands provides an open space link between Sydney's North West and South West growth centres and provides a location for passive recreation and areas such as Nurragingy are much used and much loved by residents of the surrounding suburbs. The sensitive and creative development of areas like this is also an objective of the Parklands Trust. The vision of the Trust is for Western Sydney Parklands to become "... a place for people of all backgrounds to meet, celebrate, learn, play and appreciate the environment. The Parklands will be a venue for communities to create and manage a new sustainable future on the Cumberland Plain."

BLACK'S TOWN

The northern section of Western Sydney Parklands was once a grazing area that was part of the original Blacks' Town. As European settlers occupied traditional Aboriginal hunting grounds in the early days of the colony of New South Wales, conflict sporadically erupted. This conflict escalated during drought periods as the Europeans had settled the most fertile and well-watered areas first and while the local clans could exist on the fringes during good conditions they were forced back onto the farmlands during dry spells. Settlers responded by shooting the Aboriginals who responded with more raids. During the drought of 1816 the violence escalated and Governor Macquarie ordered a punitive expedition to the Nepean Valley to subdue the Gundungurra. A number of Aboriginal guides accompanied these parties, including the Darug men Colebee and Nurragingy. Colebee was a son of Yarramundi, chief of the Boorooberongal clan from Richmond and Nurragingy belonged to the Gomerrigal-Tongarra clan from South Creek. Colebee had been a guide for William Cox when he built the first road across the Blue Mountains while Nurragingy, Colebee and Nurragingy were successful in negotiating a peaceful settlement with the Gundungurra and in recognition of their efforts Macquarie granted them 30 acres of land near the junction of Richmond Road and Rooty Hill Road North. Macquarie wrote in his diary on 25 May 1816:

On this occasion I invested Nurragingy, alias Creek Jemmy with my Order of Merit by presenting him with a handsome Brass Gorset or Breast Plate, having his name inscribed thereon in full – as chief of the South Creek Tribe. I also promised him and his friend Colebee a grant of 30 acres of land on the South Creek between them as an additional reward for their fidelity to Government and their recent good conduct.

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The irony of granting land to the people who had occupied the land for thousands of years seems to have escaped Macquarie! The grant was registered in 1819 but was only registered in Colebee's name. The location of the grant was particularly significant to Nurragingy as he belonged to this area and it included sites such as 'Iron Bark Range' which was a high campsite well above the flooding of Eastern Creek and a source of silcrete. Colebee did not stay long on the grant and returned to his clan country around Richmond and Windsor where he became a native constable and married Kitty, of the Warmuli clan from Prospect before his death in 1831.

Nurragingy stayed on the grant growing various crops and practising animal husbandry. Land opposite the grant was reserved for Aboriginals and several families moved there, possibly member of Nurragingy's South Creek clan. In 1823 the Native Institution, a school for Aboriginal children established at Parramatta in 1815 was moved to land opposite the Colebee/Nurragingy grant and a substantial mission building was erected there. It was around this time that the area (now Plumpton) became known as "Black's Town" and it is from this that the City of Blacktown gained its name. Nurragingy's cattle herd increased but many of the "Blacktown" families returned to their hunter-gatherer ways, the Native Institution closed in 1829 and Nurragingy became isolated. Later he was reduced to begging throughout the district and died at Windsor in the 1840s.

After the passing of Colebee and Nurragingy, the grant was claimed by 1843 by two of Nurragingy's sons and Colebee's younger sister, Maria Locke. Maria, a student at the Parramatta Native Institution from 1815, married Robert Locke, a convict from Norfolk, England, in 1824 - the first marriage between an Aboriginal and European in the colony. As the original land grant had been registered in Colebee's name only, the land was passed to Maria. Maria and Robert Locke along with their ten children took up residence on the land grant. Some time later they also acquired a 30 acre grant to the south that had been purchased by the Native Institution in 1822. Maria Locke died in 1878 and was outlived by nine of her children. Following her death, the 60 acres was divided into nine lots for her nine surviving children.

The Locke family lived on the property until 1917 when the Aborigines Protection Board arbitrarily decided the freehold land was an Aboriginal Reserve and revoked the freehold. The Aboriginal Protection Board sold the land off after World War II. When Mr Walter Locke attempted to reclaim the land in 1970 he was informed by authorities that this was not possible, because the family had left the land! Dozens of modern-day Darug families trace their ancestry to Maria.

NURRAGINGY RESERVE

This 63 hectare tranquil reserve attracts more than 1 million people every year. It located in the Western Sydney Parklands but is owned by Blacktown Council. While the site was not part of Governor Macquarie's land grant to Nurragingy and Colebee in 1819 it was almost certainly part of the land to which the Warrawarry (Nurragingy's clan) belonged. An archaeological survey in 1982 identified numerous Warrawarry sites along Eastern Creek including scar trees, stone tools, cores and waste flakes. Many of these artefacts were made from chert, quartz and basalt which do not occur locally. In the early days of the colony this beautiful park was part of the Cumberland Timber Forest, a major source of timber for housing and fences throughout the colony. Later it was leased as a horse stud and more recently it was an illegal rubbish dump. In 1068 the land was purchased by the New South Wales Government as a part of the Eastern Creek Open Spaces Corridor, a green belt in the Western Sydney region. In 1982 it was leased to Blacktown City Council for development as a passive recreation area. The council re-developed this dumping ground into a wonderful park as its major Bicentennial project.

The reserve is located in the floodplain of Eastern Creek so soils along the creek are primarily sand and silt while away from the creek yellow or brown clay soils are found. These

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heavy clay soils hold moisture and support a plant community that has adapted to these heavy soils and their periodic saturation. This impervious clay layer also traps floodwater in a series of overflow ponds separated by embankments and connected by brick tunnels. However, the origin of these constructed ponds is still a mystery. As with most Cumberland Plain reserves Grey Box *Eucalyptus moluccana* and Forest Red Gum *E. teretecornis* predominate on the higher ground with an under-storey of Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa*. Along the creek there are Swamp Oak *Casuarina glauca*, Cabbage Gum *E. amplifolia*, Rough-barked Apple Gum *Angophora floribunda* and the Paperbarks *Melaleuca stypheloides* and *M. Linarifolia*. While the only mammals left in the reserve are possums and bats the usual “picnic birds” - Magpies, Kookaburras, Noisy Miners and Mynahs are found and Bell Miners are re-colonising the creeks. However the reserve is also home to a flock of White-winged Choughs and a colony of Apostle Birds and White-throated Gerygones and the Scarlet Honey-eater (Blacktown Council’s official emblem) may also be spotted.

The reserve is a great place for a break as it has a kiosk, toilets, taps, barbecues, shelters and children’s playgrounds. At the weekends there are usually lots of family groups enjoying this lovely park. It is open from 7:00am to 5:00pm during the cooler months (April-September); 7:00am to 6:00pm in spring (October-November; and 7:00am to 7:00pm in the hot months (December-March) and has the following facilities:-

- Picnic and BBQ areas (wood supplied)
- Children's playgrounds
- Walking paths
- Quiet shaded areas and shelter sheds
- Toilets
- Six large shelter sheds (bookings required)
- Three wedding garden areas (bookings essential) with pavilions and bushland settings
- Nurragingy Blacksmith Forge (demonstrations every weekend)
- Kiosk next to the Colebee Centre (7 days)
- Colebee Centre which is a 200 seat function centre overlooking the central lake and surrounded by the International Gardens.
- Magnificent Chiang Lai Yuan Garden

It is a wonderful spot for a break as there are numerous picnic areas. Even on a busy summer weekend when all the shelter sheds are occupied you will still be able to find a quiet grassy spot for a picnic.

CHIANG LAI YUAN GARDEN

This garden was cooperatively designed and constructed by Blacktown City Council and Liaocheng Municipal Government in China as a symbolic gesture of friendship between the two sister cities. It was opened in 2012 and the structures in the garden are based on the Chinese Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. The name is a combination of Liaocheng’s former name and the Chinese translation of Blacktown. The garden features a formal gateway with four columns that create a dominant central passage and two side passages and marks the entrance into the garden; an exquisite seven-arched granite bridge carved by master craftsmen from Liaocheng; the Qin Quan Lang Waterfall Gazebo with its eaves decorated with traditional Chinese paintings; and the Light Mountain Pavilion perched above the waterfall once again decorated with traditional Chinese paintings.

The seven arch bridge stretches across the second lake to connect the gateway with the waterfall and the Light Pavilion above. If you have the time wander around the entire garden to take in the view of the waterfall, lake and granite bridge from the Light Pavilion above and visit the lawn on the northern side of the lake to admire the stunning reflection of the bridge in the

lake. There are information panels on each structure in the garden providing more detailed information.

BLACKTOWN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS PARK

This venue was built as a venue for baseball and softball during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. It now houses two cricket grounds an athletics track and field complex, three baseball diamonds, two soccer fields, four softball diamonds, an administration centre and parklands. Unfortunately the parklands are not easily accessible by the general public. It was used as a training and administration base for the Greater Western Sydney Giants (AFL) between 2010 and 2012 until their home ground at the Sydney Showground was upgraded. It has been the training and administration base for the Western Sydney Wanderers FC since their establishment in 2012 and in 2015 this soccer club formed a partnership with Blacktown City Council to make the Sports Park the long-term training and administrative home of the Wanderers. The partnership plans to create a high quality Wanderers Training & Administration Centre, up to eight new football fields, a specialist half-training field, parking and a High Performance Centre providing aquatics recovery, indoor training hall, sports science facilities, analysis rooms and gym.

ROOTY HILL

This hill is located in the 206 hectare Rooty Hill precinct of Western Sydney Parklands that contains the open bushland reserve of Rooty Hill, Morreau Sporting Reserve and amphitheatre and former agricultural flood plain lands along Rooty Hill Road. The hill was probably a significant landmark to the Darug on their nomadic journeys before European invasion as an open stone artefact scatter has been located on the site. It was also a post-contact camping and meeting place right up to the 1960s for Darug travelling from the Nepean Valley to Parramatta and Sydney. In 1802 Governor King established the Government Stock Farm to the north of this small hill and named the hill after a hill on Norfolk Island, his previous posting.

The character of the hill changed to its present open, grassy character as result of clearing and grazing during the time it was part of the Stock Farm. It was later granted to the Church and Schools Corporation When the Corporation failed in 1832 the land reverted to government ownership and was leased for grazing until 1865 when 135 hectares including Rooty Hill was sold to Charles McKay who donated a parcel of land on the south-west corner of the Hill to the Baptist Church. This later came into the ownership of the Presbyterian Church which retains ownership to this day. The rest of the hill remained in private ownership until 1975 when the land was resumed by the Planning Department as part of the Eastern Creek Open Space Corridor. Grazing activity ceased in the 1960s and there has been some natural regeneration of bushland - mainly on the lower slopes of the hill and around Morreau Reserve. In 1975 it was resumed as part of the Eastern Creek Open Spaces Corridor and in 1980 a sports field called Morreau Reserve was developed in the south-eastern corner of the hill. In 1992 ownership passed to Blacktown City Council. The hill has also had a continuous history of community usage from the 1890s when the then owners, the Angus family sponsored regular community events such as the Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations.

Despite its lack of height (74 metres) it has a 270° vista. To the south-west lies the Western Parklands and Bungarabee Park while the Light Horse Interchange of the M5 and M7 Freeways lies to the south. To the south-east is St Agnes Catholic High School on another small hill but the real view is to the west. For the first time, the Blue Mountains are seen as a long blue-green wall across the western horizon. The distinctive cone of Mt Banks swells above the long

ridge to the north-west followed by the even more distinctive camel-back of Mt Tomah. Further to the north, is the higher ridge of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine. The range then disappears into the distance to the northern Kurrajong Heights.

GOVERNMENT STOCK FARM

As you walk along the shared path beside the M7 motorway you will notice some paddocks on the western side of the path and reach a plaque commemorating the establishment of the Government Stock Farm in 1802. In 1802 Governor King set aside 15,600 hectares between Eastern Creek and South Creek as a Government Stock Farm known as Rooty Hill Government Farm to ensure good pasture for the growing government herds of sheep and cattle. This farm was one of four Government farms selected by Governor King and further developed by Governor Macquarie. Under Macquarie, Rooty Hill became the second most important stock farm in NSW. It provided a reserve food supply for the colony when it faced frequent crop failures and drought. It also enabled the government to control livestock prices and contributed to the establishment of colonial breeding herds. The farm extended as far south as the Western Road and was left largely unaltered from its natural state, save for an overseer's hut and scattered huts for convict shepherds and labourers, as well as stockyards and fences to enclose grazing areas. In 1815 an overseer's residence was constructed. This residence was a two storey brick built house with kitchen, stables, other necessary out-offices and a kitchen garden. It also contained two rooms for the accommodation of the Governor on his many trips to the interior. There were also several log barracks for the 20 stock keepers employed at the farm.

An inquiry into the colony's agricultural development in 1822 criticised the expense of the government stock farms and Rooty Hill farm was reduced through grants of land on the perimeter of the reserve. One of these grants was 2,000 acres to John Campbell that year on which he established "Bungarribee". Under Governor Brisbane the Rooty Hill stock farm was reduced further and in 1828 Governor Darling closed the Rooty Hill station giving over ownership of the remaining 3,000 hectares including Rooty Hill to the Church and Schools Corporation. When the Corporation failed in 1832 the land reverted to government ownership and was leased for grazing until 1865 when 135 hectares including Rooty Hill was sold to Charles McKay and remained in private hands until 1975 when Rooty Hill was resumed as part of the Eastern Creek Open Spaces Corridor. However, the property north of Eastern Road remained in private ownership. The overseer's house remained until it fell into disrepair and was demolished in the 1960s.

ROOTY HILL (SUBURB)

This area was first explored by Captain Watkin Tench in 1789 but Rooty Hill was named after the small hillock to the south of the present shopping centre and appeared on maps in 1810. A Government Farm was established just north of this hill in 1802 and Rooty Hill became the centre of government administration for the Cumberland Plains until the early 1900s. It remained a quiet orchard district until 1884 when a cannery and preserving works were established at Woodstock Estate by Walter Lamb and Robert Mawson and a vineyard was established at Dr Charles Mackay's Minchinbury estate. The opening of the Western rail line and the station at Rooty Hill pushed the development of the area. A public school was opened in 1875 and the Imperial Hotel was built in 1890 to cater for the crowds who arrived by train to attend the greyhound racing at Lamb's Woodstock Estate north of the station. A School of Arts opened in 1904 and this was the venue for the first meeting of Blacktown Council in 1906. In 1912 the first aircraft crash occurred near Rooty Hill.

Seven Hills to Ropes Crossing

Rooty Hills's most famous citizen was the geologist and explorer Sir Douglas Mawson whose family arrived from England in 1884 when Mawson was two. The family settled in Hyatts Road (now Plumpton) and Mawson was educated at Rooty Hill Public School and then Woodstock (Plumpton) School until 1893.

Nowadays Rooty Hill is most noted for Rooty Hill RSL Club which is one of the largest in New South Wales with 50,000 members. It has its own hotel and bowling alley and its cafes and restaurants serve 320,000 meals a year. However the club is actually a kilometre west of the shopping centre. In 1992 BHP opened a Mini Steel Mill west of Nurragingy Reserve and several other major manufacturers operate in this industrial area.

DR CHARLES MCKAY RESERVE

This 15 hectare reserve houses a significant stand of Cumberland Plain Woodland with Grey Box *E. Moluccana* and Narrow-leaf Stringybark *E. eugenioides* as an overstorey and an understorey of endangered *Grevillea juniperina*, *Pultenaea microphylla*, *Indigofera australis* and *Dillwynia juniperina*. At the southern end of the reserve the understorey is dominated by Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa*. Ground covers include *Goodenia bederacea*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, and *Themeda australis*. A small exotic garden (the Wright Homestead Garden) in the south-western corner has also been incorporated into the Reserve.

This reserve was once part of the Rooty Hill Depot and Stock Farm (see above) first selected by Governor King in 1802 and further developed by Governor Macquarie after 1810. The Rooty Hill Depot was one of four sites developed to provide a reserve food supply for the new colony during its establishment, when it frequently faced crop failures, drought and other difficulties. The establishment of stock farms in the colony also enabled the government to control livestock prices and prevent exploitation of the market. The Rooty Hill Depot closed in 1828, and in 1832 the land reverted to government ownership. The land was then leased for grazing until 1865, when 135 hectares (including The Rooty Hill) was sold to Dr Charles McKay who eventually owned much of the land between the Great Western Highway, Western Railway, Rooty Hill South, and Rupertswood Road. Dr McKay was also responsible for developing the nearby Minchinbury Vineyards.

The garden and farm dam of the Wright family farm were incorporated into the reserve when it was created in 1990 and this garden and the dam (now an ornamental pond) are cared for by local volunteers. The pond serves as a local wildlife refuge for amphibians and reptiles. There has been an active Bushcare group operating in the reserve since its inception and their efforts together with Blacktown Council staff have maintained the reserve in relatively pristine condition.

“NEOBLIE”

This single storey symmetrical sandstock brick cottage was built in the 1880s by the Paull family who owned the Golden Sheaf Inn at Colyton as well as a farm on the southern part of the Druiitt Estate which was part of Major George Druiitt's original grant in 1821. “Neoblie” was built on this land and after one change of ownership it was purchased by Gustavius Lix around 1900. Lix was the secretary of the Paris and London Expositions and came to Australia from France to assist with the first International Exposition in the Southern hemisphere held in the Garden Palace, a large, purpose-built glass-clad building located in what is now the south-west corner of the Sydney Botanic Gardens.

Lix was a very urbane and well-travelled gentleman and liked to entertain so “Neoblie” hosted many international visitors to the colony. Descendants of the Lix family - the Ryans -

inhabited the cottage until the early 1970s when it was sold to the state government. It is now owned by the Blacktown City Council who are restoring this unique building.

COLYTON SCHOOLMASTER'S COTTAGE

The first Colyton School was built in 1863 on the corner of Simpson Hill Road and the Great Western Highway near South Creek and the site is now marked with a cairn in Mt Druitt Park about $\frac{3}{4}$ kilometre west of the present school. In 1883 the school was moved to its present site due to the risk of flooding and a new schoolhouse was built. The first building was a simple single-storey weatherboard structure with a front veranda and gable ends. It had a galvanised iron roof and is a good example of schools built in NSW in the late 1800s. This building is still in use at the school but not visible from the highway.

A brick cottage for the headmaster, Edgar Fuller was built a few years after the original schoolhouse and in 1898 an adjoining brick classroom was incorporated into the cottage and it remained in use as classrooms until 1960 when it was renovated. Unfortunately, after this renovation the old cottage was badly damaged by vandalism but the Department of Education have now erected a high wire fence around the building and appear to have restored it for a second time.

“MT DRUITT”

A few metres from Nelson Street there is a small monument on the left commemorating the “Mt Druitt” estate. Major George Druitt arrived in New South Wales in 1817 and was appointed Acting Chief Engineer and Inspector of Works. In 1821 Governor Macquarie granted him 1,000 acres of the Rooty Hill Stock Farm. The grant was recorded as “Mt Druitt” and, although the grant was not confirmed until 1837, Druitt built a “handsome looking mansion” opposite what is now Mt Druitt Park in 1822. The estate became a social centre for guests who drove from Sydney in their carriages. Druitt sold the property around 1844 and five years later, the mansion was destroyed by fire but the driveway and gates on the Great Western Highway remained for many years. These were replaced by this small monument more recently.

MT DRUITT (SUBURB)

In 1821 Major George Druitt was granted 1,000 acres of land that covered the major portion of today's suburb of Mount Druitt. Druitt came to the colony as an officer of the 48th Regiment in 1817 and met his future wife on the journey from England in 1817. Margaret Lynch was a stowaway who married Private Terry Burns on the journey to New South Wales but they parted company when the ship reached Sydney and she lived with Druitt for eight years before their marriage in 1825. Druitt was appointed colonial engineer and inspector of public works by Governor Macquarie and he supervised the construction of many of architect Francis Greenway's buildings, including Government House Stables, now the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney. Druitt also planned and supervised the building of Fort Macquarie on Bennelong Point as well as Old South Head Road and the Great West Road to Parramatta. In 1821 Druitt was granted 2,000 acres of land and 1,000 acres of this grant was on the Cumberland Plains.

He built a substantial homestead - “Mt Druitt” - on this grant but acquired many enemies for his support of Macquarie and his emancipation policy. In 1824, Governor Brisbane

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ordered an enquiry into Druitt's running of the 48th Regiment's flour mill and recommended to the Colonial Office that he be dispossessed of his proposed grants. Druitt, who had sold his army commission in 1822 made vigorous representations to Downing Street with the support of Commissioner Bigge and his grant was confirmed in 1837. He became a landholder on the fertile Liverpool Plains and was a member of the Agricultural Society, a foundation member of the Australian Racing Club, a shareholder in the Bank of New South Wales and a member of the Australian Patriotic Association. He and his wife died in the same year - 1842 and his "Mt Druitt Estate" was sold. Seven years later the homestead was destroyed by fire. Druitt Street, which runs alongside Sydney's Town Hall, was also named after him.

Mt Druitt remained a remote agricultural area until the Western Railway reached the district in 1881. The railway station also operated as the post office from 1885 to 1918. A small shopping centre developed around the station but it remained a quiet, agricultural district until the Western Line was electrified in 1955. In 1966 the New South Wales Government's Housing Commission opened thousands of new homes and new suburbs on the Cumberland Plains between Blacktown and Mt Druitt. They also designed and developed a new town centre to service these new suburbs and in 1973 Mt. Druitt Shopping Centre opened. Two years later the train station was relocated 500 metres east to service this new shopping centre known locally as "The Great Western". In 1982 the 200-bed Mount Druitt Hospital was opened after political agitation from the local community who found it difficult to access medical services at Blacktown or Nepean Hospitals. In 2006, a new court house was opened and this was the first metropolitan court to utilise "circle sentencing" that tries to address the over-representation of indigenous Australians in custody

MT DRUITT WATERHOLES

Major George Druitt used these waterholes on Ropes Creek as a water source for his mansion "Mt Druitt". Ropes Creek runs for 23 kilometres rising near the Sydney International Equestrian Centre and flowing north into South Creek. The waterholes were also used by travellers to and from Penrith and the Blue Mountains to water their horses.

In 1853 "Mt Druitt" was subdivided by a land speculator but the Waterholes area was flood prone and the subdivided area abandoned. In more recent times this natural wetland system became degraded but it was regenerated in 1995 as a World War II Memorial Garden to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. It is now a landscaped garden with seating and interpretation panels celebrating local war heroes.

RED COW INN

Near the junction of Simpson Hill Road and Great Western Highway there is a cairn that marks the site of the original Colyton School. In 1856 Thomas Smith established the Red Cow Inn near the bridge over Ropes Creek where the Great Western Road crossed Ropes Creek. In those days the coaches changed horses there with passengers boarding the coach to Parramatta where they boarded the train to Sydney. In 1863 when the train line was extended to Penrith Thomas Smith sold the inn at Colyton and opened a new Red Cow Inn near Penrith Station. The original inn was converted into the first Colyton School. Thomas Smith then moved to Penrith to open the second Red Cow Inn near Penrith Station. In 1883 Colyton School moved west along the Great Western Road to its current location and the old inn then became the Colyton General Store and Post Office. Until its destruction in a fire in 1964 the word "School" could still be seen on this old weatherboard building.

FEDERATION FOREST

On the western side of Simpson Hill Road is the Federation Forest. This forest consists of a planting of gum trees from every state and territory in Australia. Each planting forms part of the Federation Star when seen from the air (or Google) and the entire planting forms a daisy or star when seen from above. This arboretum was one of five Federation Forests established within Blacktown City in 2001 to commemorate the centenary of the Federation of Australian States on 1 January 1901.

ROPES CROSSING RAILWAY

Ropes Crossing Boulevard runs along the route of the Ropes Creek Railway Line that was named after the creek that ran through the St Mary's Munitions Factory (see below). It was built in 1942 to transport ammunition from the factory to Sydney Harbour where it was loaded onto ships supplying Australian and American forces in the Pacific during World War II. It also carried munitions workers to and from the factory throughout the war. There were only two stations on the line, one at Dunheved and the other at Ropes Creek. The railway ran along what is now Ropes Crossing Boulevard and Ropes Creek station (whose platform has been preserved in this park) was a weatherboard building with a small control room to operate signals and points. There was a waiting room, toilet and an overhead pedestrian bridge for the munitions workers as the line ran further north into the factory for loading ammunition. When the Western Line was electrified in 1950, the Ropes Creek line was also electrified to allow 46 class electric locomotives to haul the munitions wagons.

In 1957 a third station, Cochrane was added to the line but as the munitions factory wound down the passenger trains were reduced to one 4 car single deck "red Rattler" train in the morning and another in the afternoon. In the early 1980s the line was closed to passenger traffic but remained open for freight traffic as far as the Sims Metal plant, two kilometres from the main Western Line. When this company switched to road transport the line closed and lay idle until 1986 when the line was officially closed and the overhead power supply removed. When Lend Lease began the re-development of the Munitions Factory site, the Ropes Creek Line was removed and became Ropes Creek Boulevard while the station was to become a heritage park. In 2011, the station building was burnt down. Later, the cladding on the pedestrian bridge was removed, the station platform shortened to fifty metres while the signals and other heritage equipment were dumped. However it was eventually converted to a park with the platform, rail tracks, station signs and bridge steelwork remaining as a playground for local children.

ROPES CROSSING

In 1787 Philip Gidley King arrived in Sydney a naval lieutenant on *HMS Supply*. The following year he established a settlement on Norfolk Island and became Lieutenant-Governor in 1791. In 1800 he was appointed Governor of New South Wales and did a great deal to suppress the rum trade and make the colony self-sufficient in produce. Around 1803, Surveyors Grimes and Meehan surveyed and subdivided the area south of the Hawkesbury River and east of the Nepean River to South Creek. A year later, Governor King made a grant of land along the western side of South Creek below its confluence with Ropes Creek to his daughter Elizabeth. This property was named "Elizabeth Farm" and two years later King made another grant of 600 acres to his son Philip Parker King on South Creek adjacent to his sister's land grant. By 1807 the King family controlled 3,780 acres of some of the best farming land around Sydney. The Kings returned to England almost immediately after the last grants were made by Governor

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Bligh and the estate was managed by Rowland Hassall and William Hayes who built a large house for the Kings in 1814. This was named “Dunhaved” and after the Kings returned to Australia 1832 “Dunhaved” became a dairy and horse stud with over 100 servants. The Kings remained at “Dunhaved” until the 1840s. 1840 The property was sold in 1904 and its name began to change, first to “Dunheaved” then to “Dunheved”. In 1924, John William Fisher, a grazier, consolidated the King family land under one title.

Also aboard the First Fleet was a convict, Anthony Rope, who arrived on the *Alexander* and another convict Elizabeth Pulley aboard the *Friendship*. A year later Anthony and Elizabeth married and their son Robert, born on October 30 was the first European child born in Australia. After the Rope family gained their freedom they moved to Windsor and Castlereagh where they owned eleven acres and became well-known “Dungaree” farmers. They also rented and later purchased William Faithfull’s property on the eastern side of South Creek in 1820. Among their many descendants was J T Ryan of “Emu Hall” at Emu Plains (see below). The Ropes farmed this area until 1843 and the creek that ran through their property became known as Ropes Creek and the ford across this creek was called Ropes Crossing.

In 1941 during World War II the area around Ropes Crossing and the majority of the “Dunheved” estate were compulsorily acquired by the Federal Government to construct St Marys Munitions Factory. The site was chosen due to its close proximity to road and rail transport systems and the availability of a large area of land in an undeveloped part of Sydney. The original resumptions of 5 parcels of land covered 1,841 hectares. Ropes Crossing was the Pyrotechnics Section of the munitions plant and manufactured flares, flame floats and sea markers while “Dunheved” became part of the explosives and filling factory. In 1942 a rail line was built from St Marys into the munitions plant to expedite shipping of munitions with stations at Dunheved, Cochrane and Ropes Creek. The line mainly catered for munitions traffic but there was a morning and afternoon passenger services for workers in the munitions plant. It was the first railway line in Australia to use diesel locomotives as steam engines were considered too dangerous in a munitions factory.

In 1947, “Dunheved” was demolished and the southern part of the estate became the Dunheved Industrial Estate while the western end became the new suburb of Kingswood. The northern part of the factory was set up as a migrant hostel but in 1950 a new munitions factory was built for the Korean War. The railway line into the plant was electrified in 1957 and there was another resurgence of activity at the munitions plant between 1965 and 1975 for the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War the plant employed 1,200 people but after this war, the workforce dropped to 400. By 1986 production had slowed down further and in 1988 the Federal Government set up a new government owned corporation, ADI Limited to manufacture all munitions and weapons for the Australian Defence Force. In 1990 ADI decided to replace the out-dated munitions factories at St Marys, Maribyrnong and Footscray with a new factory at Benalla and the Ropes Creek railway line closed the same year. In 1993 production ceased at St Marys and ADI then applied for re-zoning of the land at St Marys and established a joint venture with Lend Lease in 1994 to develop the munitions factory land which extended from Forrester Road at Ropes Crossing to the Northern Road at Cranebrook. A local campaign began to retain the site as a Nature Reserve to protect the large kangaroo and emu populations that existed within the site and in 1997 the 1997 the Australian Heritage Council placed an Interim Heritage Order on 1,100 hectares of the site based on the presence of Cumberland Plain Woodland. This was later reduced to 900 hectares with the provision for up to 5,000 houses and the 900 hectares was nominated as a Regional Park to be managed by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.

The 645 hectares of Lend Lease Land is being developed as three residential precincts (Ropes Crossing, Jordan Springs, Central) and one industrial precinct (Dunheved). In 2004 the construction of the new suburb of Ropes Crossing commenced. In 2006, the first residents moved in and two years later Ropes Crossing School opened and Coles built a supermarket in

the new shopping centre. In 2014 the eastern section of the Regional Park was opened and development of the regional park is underway.

ST MARYS MUNITIONS FACTORY

On the western side of Ropes Boulevard there are the ruins of a three-storey building. This is all that remains of St Marys Muniton Factory. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in November 1941 the Australian government realised that supplies of munitions from overseas could be cut off by a naval blockade and in 1941 they resumed 5 parcels of land covering 1,841 hectares of land north of St Marys around the confluence of South Creek and Ropes Creek to build a munitions factory to supply the Australian armed forces and their allies in the Pacific. The site at St Marys was chosen because of its proximity to the Main Western Railway and its remoteness from any residential suburbs. The factory was designed by the Department of Interior in association with staff from the Ministry of Munitions, and was coordinated by the Allied Works Council using the Department of Main Roads, Sydney County Council, Metropolitan Water Sewerage & Drainage Board, NSW Public Works, Postmaster-General's Department, NSW Government Railways plus 75 private contractors. Production commenced in November 1942 and the Ropes Creek railway line from St Marys into the centre of the factory was opened a month later with stations at Dunheved, Cochrane and Ropes Creek. The factory was divided into nine sections:-

- Administration occupied 15 acres.
- Maintenance 25 acres
- Proof-at-Rest, 15 acres
- Magazines 530 acres - located on the western side of South Creek. The southern section of this area is now Kingswood while the northern section became Jordan Springs
- Toluol and Bulk Store, 110 acres
- Fuse production 130 acres
- Pyrotechnic, 150 acres - located on the site of Ropes Crossing
- High Explosives 280 acres - located on the site of the Dunheved industrial estate
- Proof Range, 5 acres

By the end of the war there were 850 buildings on the site (many of them surrounded by earthen mounds or berms) as well as 233 staff cottages, 16 hostels for workers and 3 community garages. The original factory stretched well south of Ropes Crossing to North St Marys and some of the staff cottages may still be seen between Maple Road and Griffiths Street where the cottages face inwards towards a common garden area. Commonwealth Peace Officers patrolled the site keeping trespassers out and maintaining security in the area. Quarters for single peace officers and a stable were maintained near the Magazine at Kingswood as parts of the site were patrolled by horse. At its peak, the factory employed over 4,000 people and ran 3 shifts per day. The railway line mainly catered for munitions traffic but there was a morning and afternoon passenger service for workers who did not live in the hostels. It was the first railway line in Australia to use diesel locomotives as steam engines were considered too dangerous in a munitions factory. The factory had six ammonia-refrigerating plants to supply cooling as many of the munitions were temperature-sensitive during production and five other buildings had their own refrigeration plants. It had its own sewerage works and 20 electrical sub-stations. The Magazine area on the Kingswood side had 105 magazines, 10 igloos, 13 drum yards, 17 chemical stores, plus 13 administrative and other buildings, all connected by 12 miles of tramway. Ten of these magazines were controlled by the Royal Australian Navy to hold naval ordnance. There were two fire stations, one each in the Administrative and Pyrotechnic areas. A water tower and two high level tanks were built as part of the fire-fighting system. Forty air raid shelters were

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built and another 65 were partially complete when air raid precautions were halted in 1944. They were later used as stores, for paint, boxes and for salvage. The first casualty station was commenced in the Pyrotechnic section in November 1942. By 1945 there were three casualty stations in Pyrotechnic, Administration and High Explosives areas. The factory specialised in “tropic proofing” munitions to withstand the heat and humidity of the tropics. This included the re-packaging of 23 million rounds of US ammunition for use in the Pacific. The works produced 51,779 flame floats, 118,083 grenades 242,765 twenty five pounder artillery shells for the Australian Army as well as cannon ammunition and shells for the Australian Navy and the Royal Navy in the Pacific.

At the end of the war in August 1945, production was quickly wound down and the buildings on the old site were leased and the southern part of the site became the Dunheved Industrial Estate while the south-western end became the new suburb of Kingswood. The northern part of the factory was set up as a migrant hostel but in 1950 a new munitions filling factory was built in 1957 for the Korean War adjacent to the old wartime factory in what is now Ropes Crossing. The railway line into the plant was electrified in 1957 and there was another resurgence of activity at the munitions plant between 1965 and 1975 for the Vietnam War when the plant employed 4,000 people. In 1963 South Creek and Ropes Creek flooded the site drowning 1,000 sheep that grazed the area to keep grass under control. During the Vietnam War the plant employed 1,200 people but after this war, the workforce dropped to 400. By 1986 production had slowed down further and in 1988 the Federal Government set up a new government owned corporation, ADI Limited to manufacture all munitions and weapons for the Australian Defence Force. In 1990 ADI decided to replace the out-dated munitions factories at St Marys, Maribyrnong and Footscray with a new factory at Benalla and the Ropes Creek railway line closed the same year. In 1993 munitions production ceased at St Marys.

Almost all the buildings on the site were removed when the site was sold to Delfin-Lend Lease and only three munitions era buildings remain in the Park.

WIANAMATTA REGIONAL PARK

This regional park covers approximately 900 hectares of the former Australian Defence Industries (ADI) site at St Marys in Western Sydney. The overall ADI site had an area of 1,545 hectares and stretched 7 kilometres east to west from Forrester Road at Ropes Crossing to the Northern Road at Cranebrook and 2 kilometres north to south from Werrington to Llandillo. In 1993 munitions production ceased at St Marys, ADI applied for re-zoning of the land and established a joint venture with Lend Lease in 1994 to develop the munitions factory land. A local campaign began to retain the site as a Nature Reserve to protect the large kangaroo and emu populations that existed within the site and in 1997 the Australian Heritage Council placed an Interim Heritage Order on 1,100 hectares of the site based on the presence of Cumberland Plain Woodland. This was later reduced to 900 hectares with a provision for up to 5,000 houses and the 900 hectares was nominated as a Regional Park to be managed by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.

Wianamatta Regional Park lies within the Cumberland Plain and protects part of the South Creek and Ropes Creek catchment. It contains remnants of Cumberland Plain vegetation communities including Alluvial Woodland, Shale Plains Woodland, Shale/Gravel Transition Forest and Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest. These communities have been extensively cleared with only 35,715 hectares still intact which represents 13.4% of the original woodlands. Only 8,572 hectares (3.2%) is in public ownership with half of this - 4,427 hectares - protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

The Park is located within the Cumberland Plain, part of the Sydney Sandstone Basin. The Cumberland Plain is an area of 266,000 hectares covering a broad shallow basin in western

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Sydney between Ryde and Cattai (east-west) and Cattai-Thirlmere (north-south). Sandstone plateaus surround the Cumberland Plain to the north, south and west. The Cumberland Plain is gently undulating country with elevations from 10 metres above sea level to 150 metres. The Cumberland Plain is dominated by the Wianamatta Group of sandstones formed by sediments from the middle Triassic age. The Wianamatta Group consists of Bringelly Shale, Minchinbury Sandstone and Ashfield Shale. Bringelly Shale occurs in the eastern and western sections of the Park and is a complex formation characterised by claystone and siltstone, laminite, sandstone, and carbonaceous claystone. The north-central section of the Park adjacent to Ropes Creek is mainly Londonderry Clay that overlays the Bringelly Shale in that area. Londonderry Clay is Tertiary in age and is characterised by impervious clay composed of kaolinite, illite and mixed layered clay, with associated iron and quartz material. Sand is found in patches and laterite pisolites (pea stone) and nodules are also common throughout Londonderry Clay. Quaternary sediments, which were deposited in the most recent era, occur along major watercourses on the Cumberland Plain. These overlay the older Tertiary sediments and the Wianamatta Group. These alluvial sediments have accumulated along the South and Ropes Creek systems. They are derived from the erosion of Hawkesbury Sandstone and Wianamatta Shale, and are characterised by fine-grained sand, reddish brown silt and clay.

The Park provides a good example of the flat landscape typical of the Cumberland Plain. South and Ropes Creek cross the Park in a north-south direction providing good examples of streamside vegetation with large trees, channels and floodplain landforms. There are clear differences in the distribution of vegetation communities and of individual plant species that relate to the different soils present in the Park. The Park provides a good example of how the Australian flora has evolved in concert with the changing landscape to survive over millennia in a range of different environments.

There have been at least 116 bird species, nine mammal species, eight frog species and ten reptile species recorded. Seven threatened vertebrate species have also been surveyed in the Park. The park also supports a sizeable population of Eastern Grey Kangaroos *Macropus giganteus*, Red Kangaroos (*M. rufus*) and Emus *Dromaius novaehollandiae*. These animals are not remnants of the native populations of the Cumberland Plain but were introduced to the site since the late 1950s. The nearest natural Red Kangaroo population is around 400 kilometres west of the park. Most of the animals introduced to the site were orphans raised by members of the community and released into the ADI site when they became too big to keep. The emus have maintained a relatively stable population but a program of sterilisation is underway to reduce the number of kangaroos from 4,000 to a more sustainable level of 0.3-0.5 kangaroos per hectare, which is approximately 270 – 450 animals. This program has reduced numbers to 1,200 but even this reduced population is placing pressure on grazing land and male animals are still inclined to show territorial and aggressive behaviour.

Six broad cultural heritage themes may be seen in the Park:-

1. Aboriginal occupation over many centuries by the Darug people as the Park protects 34 of the 71 recorded Aboriginal sites on the ADI property. Camp sites, quarry sites and scattered stone artefacts dominate the artefacts found and it is believed that this area was an important meeting area and source of food for the Gomerrigal-Tongarra clan as a wide range of stone artefacts have been found including silcrete, chert, indurated mudstone, basalt, quartz and quartzite.
2. The first contact with the Aboriginal people and pioneering settlement at the beginning of the 19th century. There are nine heritage sites and some of these (e.g. Dunheved Homestead site, tree plantings near the homestead and Elizabeth Farm site relate to colonial land grants and pastoral activities from 1803 onwards.
3. The intensification of rural settlement, and construction of road and transport infrastructure during 19th and early 20th century. Grazing continued throughout the nineteenth century with timber cutting becoming the major industry from the 1860s.

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4. The rapid development of the explosives and filling factory in response to Australia's isolation during WWII that covered part of the site. This led to substantial modification of the landscape although regrowth is rapidly covering these changes.
5. The further development and operation of a munitions factory from the 1950s in response to Cold War pressures.
6. The battle for conservation versus development. By the 1990s, ADI commenced planning to leave the site and redevelop all of it for urban and industrial development. A fierce battle began to retain the site as a Nature Reserve to protect the kangaroo and emu populations that had built up over the years it was a protected Defence site. This resulted in 900 hectares being proclaimed a Regional Park and the St Marys Development Agreement (2002) was drawn between the developer and the NSW Government. This agreement provides for a staged process for transfer of 854 hectares of the land to the Minister for the Environment and a process for considering an additional 47 hectares. It also includes a financial contribution of \$6.9 million in cash, capital improvements or services over the life of the development. The developer is also responsible for decontamination of the eastern sector of the park. This decontamination process included excavation and stockpiling of contaminated soils followed by appropriate disposal methods, including high temperature thermal desorption. Subsurface imaging surveys were used to locate metallic items, which were then excavated, identified and disposed of appropriately to ensure that the site was clear of any explosive ordnance, either on the surface or buried.

The park is separated into four sections. The majority of the park is a Primary Habitat Reserve which is fenced off to protect the population of kangaroos and emus while the rest of the park is used for recreation centred in the Eastern, Central and Western Visitor Precincts. The only section of the park that is currently only open is the Eastern Recreation Precinct which is open from 8:00am to 6:00pm seven days a week. All the bitumen roads are now dedicated cycle-walk paths so the only vehicles you will encounter are National Parks vehicles.