
Lane Cove National Park Heritage Walk



Celebrating the Centenary of Australia's Federation 1901 - 2001

About the walk

This walk was conceived to mark the Centenary of Federation in Australia in 1901. It follows pre-existing tracks and roads, between the Park Office and Fiddens Wharf Reserve, with signs highlighting features of historical and natural significance.

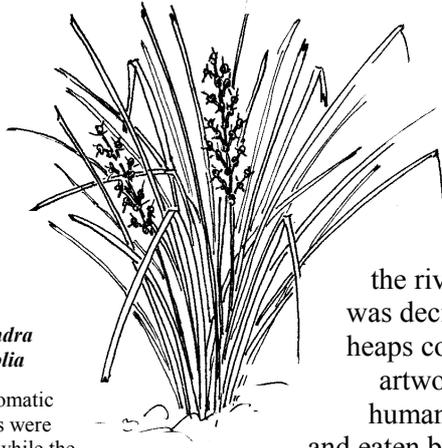
Look out for

- ▮ the earliest surviving European buildings in the Ku-ring-gai municipality
- ▮ the plants used by the Aboriginal people who occupied the Lane Cove River valley
- ▮ the diversity of plants and flowers in any one place you might stop and look around
- ▮ the few surviving trees from early logging in the area
- ▮ the weeds which clog the creeks running in from the streets

The track is approximately 2.5 km and easy grade.

History of the park

Aboriginal habitation



Lomandra longifolia

The aromatic flowers were eaten, while the leaves were used to make net bags

For many thousands of years before white settlement, the Lane Cove River (Turrumburra) Valley was occupied by Aboriginal people. In 1788 small family groups of the Camaraigal clan, part of the Guringai tribe, were living on the river. Very little detail is known about these people as most of their population was decimated by smallpox in 1789. However, traces survive in rock shelters, midden heaps containing mollusc shells and stone artifacts, axe-grinding grooves and in artwork found carved on rocks near the river banks. Carvings include a sunburst, human-like drawings and many mammals. The area is rich in plants which were used and eaten by the Aboriginal people. The river would have provided abundant fish and shellfish. Small mammals and wallabies would also have been part of the diet.

Governor Arthur Phillip first ventured to the Lane Cove River valley in 1788, searching without success for arable land. The white settlers' first recorded contact with the original inhabitants in the valley was in 1790, when Lieutenant Ralph Clark and 3 convicts rowed up the river. They exchanged tools and spent about 2 hours with 2 natives, Dourrawan and Tirrawan.

European settlement on the east bank of Lane Cove River

Timber logging, using convict gangs, possibly began in the area in 1804, felling the dense stands of tall, straight timber that covered the hillsides. Bullock drays carried the logs down to the river to be rowed or punted down river to Sydney Harbour. The Lane Cove Sawing Establishment was set up by the Government in 1808, about halfway between the ridge and the river, on what is now Fiddens Wharf Road. Three wharves were built in the area for the timber industry - Fiddens', Hyndes' or Cook's (opposite the Park boatshed) and Dick's (in line with the current Grosvenor Road).

Blackbutt was the most abundant timber in the area and is still one of Australia's most important commercial hardwood timbers. Tall Blackbutts remain in the Fiddens Wharf Reserve area.

Other valuable timbers logged from the area were Blue Gum for wheel felloes, Red Mahogany for many construction purposes including shipbuilding, Red Bloodwood for fencing, Turpentine for wharves and houses, Sydney Red Gum and Forest She-oak for roof shingles.

The area of Lane Cove developed a reputation as a haven for all types of criminals, including smugglers and sly-grog dealers.

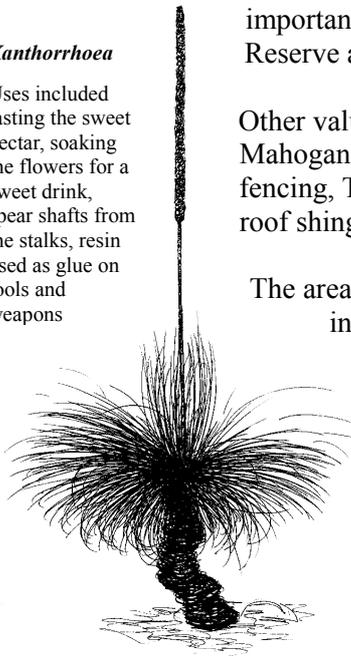
The itinerant timber-getters had left the area by 1819, when most of the useful timber was gone, and the Orchardists moved into the flatter area where the weir is now.

The first recorded European to actually settle in the area was William Henry, who built a bark hut and planted a small vineyard (now Fullers Park) on Blue Gum Creek in about 1828. Other settlers farmed the area on both sides of Little Blue Gum Creek, living in huts. Boatmen such as Joseph Fiddens occupied huts further up river. Many were illegal occupants.

West of Little Blue Gum Creek was the **Jenkins** orchard "Millwood", on land bought in 1852. Thomas Jenkins and his wife Maria (granddaughter of William Henry) built the large house called "Waterview" and a wharf from which to load the fruit onto their own steamer, "Nellie". The stone kitchen, probably the oldest surviving stone structure (circa 1856) in the Ku-ring-gai municipality, is all that remains of "Waterview". The cottage was built from local timber and stone. Outlying huts would have housed itinerant sawyers and farm labourers working on the property.

Xanthorrhoea

Uses included tasting the sweet nectar, soaking the flowers for a sweet drink, spear shafts from the stalks, resin used as glue on tools and weapons

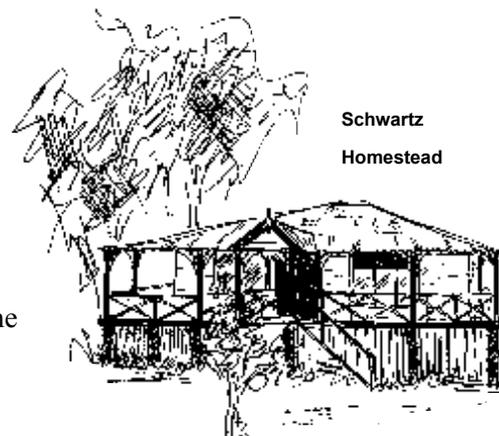


William and Jane **Baker** purchased their land on the east bank of the river in 1853, building the existing stone cottage in 1865. It is thought that the kitchen was at the back of a larger timber house, with separate rooms, a verandah and a stone core. The Baker property was sold to Hans Andra, a sculptor, before passing to the Minister for Lands in 1930.

At nearby Schwartz Point, John Schwartz leased the land in 1884-85 and in 1896 had a strawberry farm up near the present De Burghs Bridge. “**Schwartz’ Homestead**” was probably built by George Warr, an orchardist.

Orcharding declined after 1900 because of problems such as soil deterioration, bushfires and pest and fungal disease. Land development along the river slowed and orchards moved further up the ridge towards better land transport.

However, river traffic was still important and in 1908 local residents formed the Upper Lane Cove Ferry Co. Ltd to carry passengers, mail, livestock and merchandise between Figtree and Killara (Fiddens Wharf). Two flat-bottomed motor launches were used, the “Killara” and the “Native Rose”. The service ceased in 1918 when it was sold to the Swan family to transport picnickers to their property “Fairylnd”. Picnickers still used rowing boats, canoes and launches to travel as far as Blue Hole, near De Burghs Bridge.



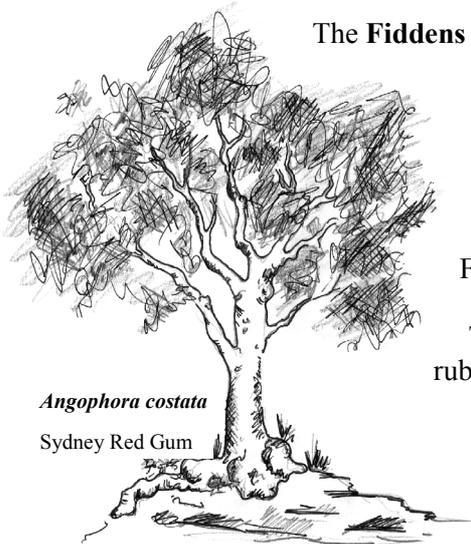
Schwartz Homestead

As the river was being used more and more for recreation there were moves to “beautify” the area by building a weir to create a permanent high tide and establish a recreation park. After 1924 orchards and other lands were bought by the government specifically for that purpose. The Jenkins orchard remained until it was resumed for the Park in the 1930s.

Bushwalking gained in popularity from the 1920s to 1930s. Tracks were formed along the river, with stone steps and pathways, picnic tables and seats being built at Fiddens Wharf Reserve during the Depression. The weir was built and the National Park established in 1938.

The **Fiddens Wharf** area has retained its popularity as a picnic ground from the 1900s, when sometimes river travellers would camp there for weeks at a time, or companies would bring their employees for an outing. In 1939 scouts attending an Australasian Jamboree at Bradfield used the reserve for passive recreation. From 1939-1945, airmen at an RAAF training camp at Bradfield also used the area, built timber structures in the bushland and reconstructed the deteriorated timber wharf. Following the war, their Nissen huts were used as a migrant hostel.

The current playing field was built by Ku-ring-gai council by 1966. Concrete rubble near the river may be parts of the broken up airmen’s ablution block.

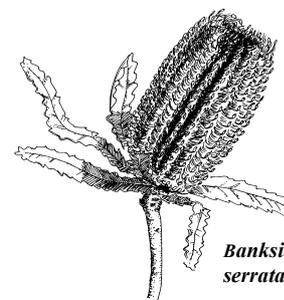


Angophora costata
Sydney Red Gum

Vegetation in the Park

From either end - Fiddens Wharf or Jenkins Kitchen - the Heritage Walk follows river flats and then a sandstone ridge and back to river flats. Many creek gullies cross the flats. The vegetation changes markedly from one level to another.

These different areas contain numerous varying vegetation communities - groups of plant types which commonly grow together. Woodlands, shrublands and heaths found along upper slopes and ridge lines include a very common tree community which contains **Scribbly gums** and *Banksia serrata* .

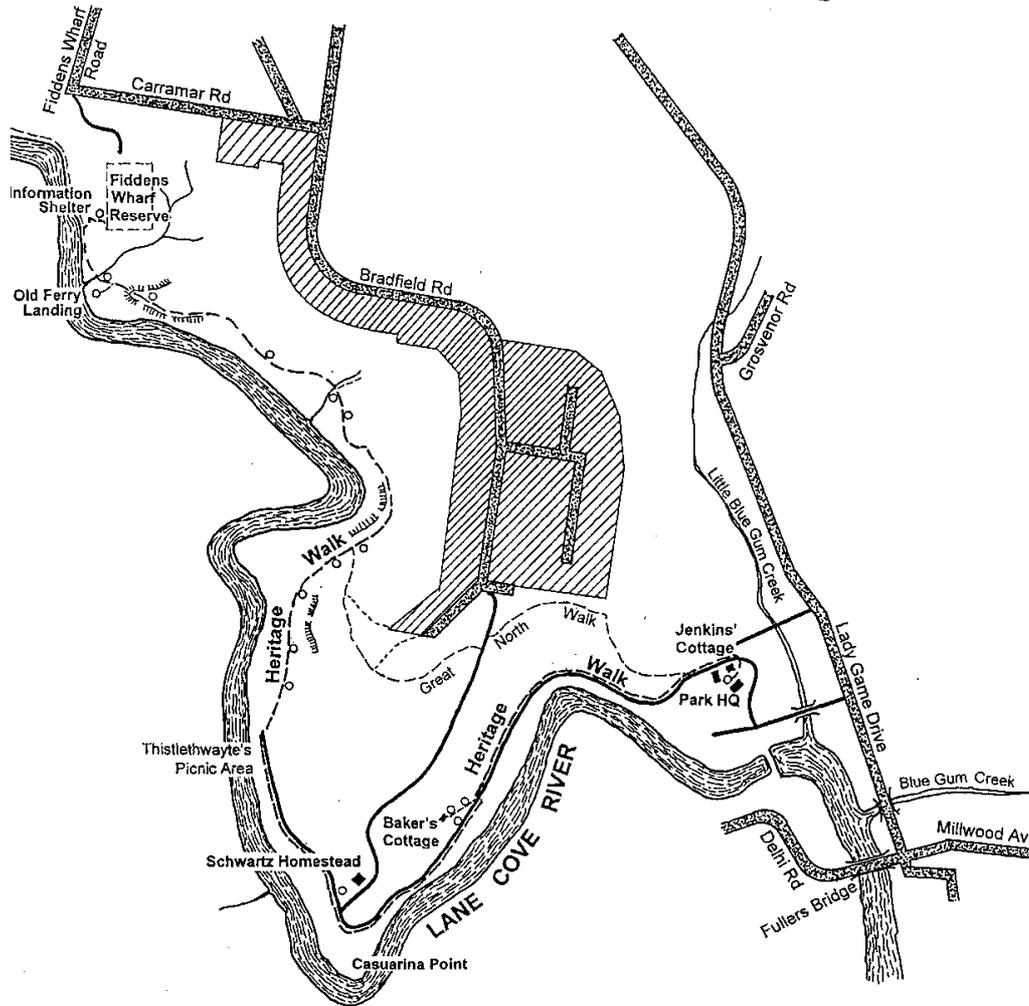
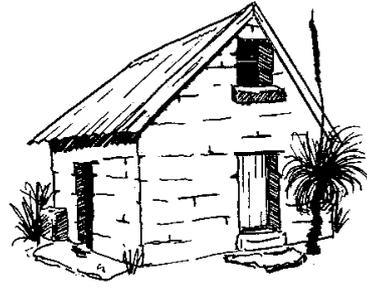


Banksia serrata
Old Man Banksia

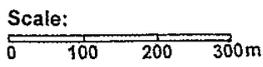
Open forests of **Sydney Red Gum**, **Sydney Peppermint** and **Red Bloodwood** are common on the drier slopes.

Stop at signs along the track and try to identify the plants growing there.

Lane Cove National Park Heritage Walk



- Legend:**
- Built-up area
 - Public Road
 - Park Road
 - Heritage Walk
 - Other tracks
 - Rock escarpment
 - Information board



Map drawn by Ken Wyatt

