

10: Salt Marsh Walk

Crosslands to Calna and Sams Creeks, return

Route: Crosslands car park to Calna Creek (or extend to Sams Creek) & return

Distance: 1.3 km (one way) with a possible extension to Sams Creek (adding about 1.0 km each way)

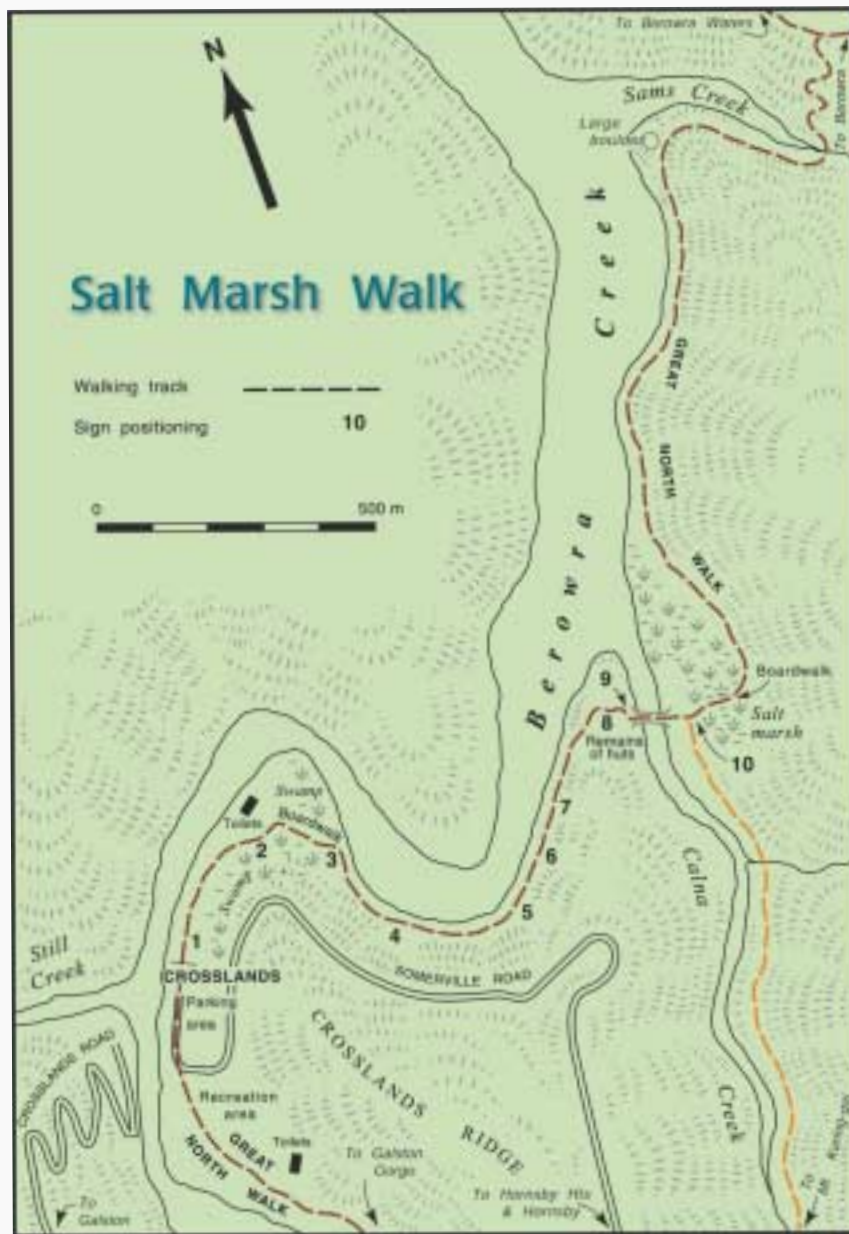
Grade: Moderate; two short steep sections, and some rough steps and rough sections of path

Time: To Calna Creek return: 1–2 hours

To Sams Creek return: 2–4 hours

Transport: Single car to Crosslands via Somerville Road, Hornsby Heights

Track status: Official track with interpretive signs to Calna Creek



SALT MARSH WALK GUIDE

Interpretive Walk

Synopsis

This interpretive walk (an educational section of the Great North Walk) follows the Great North Walk along Berowra Creek through mangroves, salt marshes, forest and woodlands, and past evidence of Aboriginal occupation. There are interpretative signs to Calna Creek.

The signs form part on an educational walk for school projects, years 4 to 8. There are separate school and teacher's kits for junior high and upper primary schools. These are available through Hornsby Shire Council's environmental education officer. A brochure on the interpretive trail is available from the Council and from NPWS.

Car park to Berowra Creek

Sign 1 Crosslands Interpretive Trail

From the north-eastern end of the Crosslands' car park follow the bitumen service track, noting Swamp Oaks *Casuarina glauca*, the mangroves by the creek, and the remnant trees from the former open-forest (Bloodwoods and Turpentines).

Sign 2 Swamped out the back

To the right of the picnic shelters follow the Great North Walk (Calna Creek 1.3 km) using the boardwalk across the swamp. This boardwalk is suitable for wheelchair use.. This swamp was originally a channel made by Burton Crossland to assist his boat building and construction activities. It has now formed naturally into a backswamp. On quiet days a lyrebird may be heard calling near here. The small plant with bright green angular leaves growing abundantly is New Zealand Spinach *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, an edible bush food.

At the end of the boardwalk you come to the start of a mangrove section featuring two species: the River Mangrove *Aegiceras corniculatum* and the Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* var. *australis*.¹ Patches of Sea Rush *Juncus kraussii* can be seen growing in the shallow water.

The track continues behind the mangroves, more or less following the high-tide line to a cleared area and large rock. Here a viewing platform takes advantage of views of the creek and to enable marine organisms to be inspected at low tide.

Sign 3 Original inhabitants

From this point on there is frequent evidence in shell middens of the original Kuring-gai Aboriginal people. While this track gives the appearance of an amenity provided by government authorities for the benefit of modern-day bushwalkers, it has probably been in use by humans since sea levels rose following the end of the last ice age thousands of years ago.

For an authoritative account of the indigenous people see section 2.2 'Aboriginal people of Berowra Valley'.

Berowra Creek to Calna Creek

As the track continues, the bushland on the right — mainly open-forest with Swamp Oak *Casuarina Glauca* and the occasional Grey Gum *Eucalyptus punctata* dominating — rises steeply towards Somerville Road.

Sign 4 All Creatures great and small

After the sign giving information on the animal species in the area there are a number of minor detours to avoid the high-tide line. Here and there large boulders have tumbled down from the slopes above.

1. For details about mangroves see the information box in Walk 8: *Lyrebird Gully*.

Jennifer Lewis



Mangroves at high tide when the intertidal area is a haven for small fish.

Hornsby Shire Council



Boardwalk viewing platform gives access to intertidal zone marine life.

George Foster



The track reveals an almost continuous layer of shells, all evidence of concentrated use by indigenous people of seafood resources along the creek.



Buds and fruit of the Grey Gum *Eucalyptus punctata* should be present on the ground in this section of the walk.



Interpretive signs throughout the walk add greatly to understanding of the Salt Marsh environment.

Boys will be boys

As far back as we can remember, this tree between Calna and Sams Creeks has sprouted ropes on a regular basis. Modern management requirements include minimisation of risk for users of the Park under the threat of substantial public liability risks. It seems that the sheer pleasure of a swing and plunge still has the same attraction for kids today as it did for their grandfathers.



Val Williams

Xanthorrhoea arborea in company with wildflowers.



Paul Fredrickson

Star fungi - one of many, often pungent fungi to be seen in the Park.

Sign 5 Catch the threats

At a major and particularly scenic bend in the stream the currents have so deepened the creek bed as to form a swimming hole and fishing place. The sign at this point gives information about the catchment.

Sign 6 The Rock Club

After the sign dealing with the rocky places as habitats for plants and animals the track crosses several more shell middens.



Lorraine Muscio

Sign 7 Bush supermarket

At the next sign grass trees *Xanthorrhoea arborea* are abundant. The sign explains the uses that the indigenous people and early settlers made of this plant.

Next, just after some stone steps — five down and three up — an old 1.5 m by 2 m concrete slab can be seen at the water's edge. This was once a landing stage serving the occupants of some fishing shacks formerly on the ridge above.

The track rises quite steeply, through open-forest thinning to woodland on the ridge. Near the top are the remnants of a sandstone wall embankment, built perhaps to support a track between the landing stage and the shacks.

Sign 8 Stop! Look! Listen! And smell!

At the ridge-top is another shell midden. As locations selected by the indigenous people for the consumption of shellfish would have had some particular advantage, the presence of a shell midden at this location, now hemmed in by trees, suggests that it might once have afforded a panoramic view of the two creeks, Berowra Creek below to the east and Calna Creek to the west.

An indistinct path crosses the main track at the interpretive sign, heading uphill to the right and following the ridge towards the hairpin bend on Somerville Road. About 40 m along it on the left are

galvanised iron and wooden frame remains of one of the fishing shacks. Back on the main route, the steep descent is made easier by log-formed steps.

Sign 9 Rock 'n roll

Just before the last descent there is a seat and a sign explaining the geological and natural history of the Hornsby plateau, and of the earth. Calna Creek is just below, and the steep cliffs of Gundah Ridge rise on the other side of it.

The twin logs bridging Calna Creek were dropped into place by an Australian Army helicopter when the Benowie walking track was formed in the 1980s.¹ The 700 mm wide boardwalk is most springy at the halfway point.

Calna Creek to Sams Creek

Calna Creek is fringed with mangroves at the log bridge. There is a walking track sign on the far side: the route to the right leads to Mt Kuring-gai (via Lyrebird Gully), that to the left continues the Great North Walk towards Berowra. Go left for this walk.

Sign 10 Fragile marsh

Almost at once a salt marsh is reached, crossed by a boardwalk. Calna Creek salt marsh, once threatened by sand-mining proposals in Berowra Creek, is one of the few salt marshes in the Sydney region not to have been filled in for sports fields, housing or industrial uses. It looks like an open paddock, yet it floods twice a day with each high tide; and at the spring and autumnal equinoxes it does so to a considerable depth. Sea Rush *Juncus kraussii*, Bare Twig-rush *Baumea juncea* and Austral Seablite *Suaeda australis* dominate. The marsh is fringed by stands of Swamp Oak *Casuarina glauca* and River Mangroves. In time, if sea levels do not rise rapidly and siltation continues, this area might be colonised by shrubs and trees and could become a river flat forest. Already *Casuarina glauca* has established small islands in the marsh.

For a slightly longer walk, a 1 km extension beyond the interpretive signs at the salt marsh is recommended. This rocky and undulating segment is described in Walk 8, Lyrebird Gully under the heading 'Calna Creek to Sams Creek'. It is as attractive as the first section, and the big rock at Sams Creek is the highlight at the end.

Return

The return to Crosslands 1.3 km from the salt marsh or 2.3 km from Sams Creek is likely to be much quicker than the outward walk. There are barbecue facilities at Crosslands.

George Foster



View of the northern end of Crosslands from the access road

Ken Turnidge



Ideal rendezvous for group canoeing

George Foster



Sandbar at the entrance to Calna Creek from the twin-log bridge

Jeremy Steele



The salt marsh may often appear dry and hard but is always waterlogged and subject to tidal inundation.

1. For a description of this operation see Story of the Park.



Paul Fredrickson

Superb views from Barnett's Lookout and track head facilities



Paul Fredrickson

Shaded open picnic space at Bellamy Street trackhead

Picnic places

Paul Fredrickson

Hornsby is promoted as the 'Bushland Shire' and as such offers innumerable places for informal picnics on bushwalking tracks as well as in suburban parks. Within the Park, Council and National Parks and Wildlife Services have formally equipped a number of places with picnic facilities, which are described below. Open fires are discouraged at most times owing to bushfire risk, so visitors should carry lightweight walkers' gas barbecue equipment. Camping facilities are restricted, for park management purposes, to the Council owned section of the riverside flats at Crosslands.

1 Bellamy Street, Pennant Hills

Conveniently situated at one of the original trackheads of the Benowie section of the Great North Walk (see Walk 1: *Jungo*) for picnics at the start or end of the walk, this grassy area is surrounded by bushland and has easy access from the nearby car park at the northern end of Bellamy Street. It is sunny at midday and is provided with a garbage bin and tap water. However, it is within sight of nearby houses.

Location and facilities of Picnic Places

	Location	Disab. access	Tables	Tap water	BBQ	Eins	WC	Camp	Other attraction	Access	Rating
1	Bellamy Street, Pennant Hills	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N		C, Ft	★
2	Historic Quarry, Thornleigh	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	History	Ft	★★
3	The Jungo on Berowra Creek	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		Ft	★
4	Lakes Reserve, Cherrybrook	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Playground, shops	C, Ft	★★
5	Rosemead Road, Hornsby	Y	Y	Y	E	Y	N	N		C, Ft	★★★
6	Top of Galston Gorge	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Views	C	★★
7	Tunks Ridge	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Solitude	Ft	★★
8	Crosslands Reserve	Y	Y	Y	E	Y	Y	Y	Sports, space	C, Ft	★★★★
9	Barnetts Reserve, Berowra	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Views, Playground	C	★★★
10	Berowra Waters	Y	Y	Y	E	Y	Y	N	Tourist, shops	C, Ft	★★★

C= car, E=electric barbecue, Ft = on foot along tracks, N = no, Y = yes.

2. Historic Quarry, Thornleigh

This is an atmospheric, shady picnic area surrounded by tall gum trees, set within the high rock walls of an old sandstone quarry. See Walks 1: *The Jungo* and 4: *Bouera* for access, which is on foot along rocky fire trails (about 250 m) from Timbarra Road or De Saxe Close in Thornleigh or (about 500 m) from the Bellamy Street trackhead described above. Logs for seating are the only facilities.

The Historic Quarry is popular with local youth groups for evening barbecues. See Chapter 2.3 for a description of the historic quarry and the zigzag railway.

3. The Jungo on Berowra Creek

The Jungo is a sunny clearing with bush all round and with no evidence of houses on the ridge-tops. It is approached on foot, along bushwalking tracks from Bellamy Street or Boundary Road trackheads, or on rocky fire trails from Schofield Parade in Pennant Hills or part of the Callicoma walk from Cherrybrook as discussed in Walks 1, 2 or 4.

Nearby, hidden in thick bush, is the junction of Berowra and Zig Zag Creeks. This spot, now filled with sediment, was once known as the 'junction swimming hole', one explanation of the 'jungo' name of the area.

4. Lakes Reserve, Cherrybrook

The suburban park Lakes Reserve, Cherrybrook, lies outside the Park, at the start of Walk 2: Callicoma. It is a convenient place to start walks into the Park. It has good picnic facilities and is close to shops and a garage. Ample parking is available nearby.

5. Rosemead Road, Hornsby

This pretty park in a tall blue gum setting is the starting point for the trackhead to Fishponds and the Great North Walk (see Walk 5: *Blue Gum: Joes Mountain circuit*). It is readily accessible by car at the northern end of Rosemead Road or can be approached on foot, down 230 bush steps from Quarry Road and Hornsby station. There is tap water, as well as an electric barbecue and roofed picnic tables.



George Foster

Open-air community theatre and picnic use was made of the quarry in the late 1980s after landscaping carried out by local Rotary Clubs.



Jamie Wright

Waratahs may be seen on most walks in the Park in the spring.



Paul Fredrickson

Pleasant picnic location at Lakes of Cherrybrook



Jeremy Steele

Tall Blue Gums at Rosemead Road Park

Gregor Newton



Galston Gorge lookout and picnic area

Jeremy Steele



Rest and camping area on Tunks Ridge suitable for serious walkers - but no drinking water.

Paul Fredrickson



Crosslands is a popular site for learning the basics of camping and responsible care of the environment.

Paul Fredrickson



Facilities match the variety and quality of the environment at Crosslands.

6. Top of Galston Gorge

This small paved picnic area, easily reached from an adjacent parking area for three cars, has picnic tables. It catches the afternoon sun and has excellent views over the bush-lined Berowra Creek valley in Galston Gorge. It is situated next to Galston Road, near the first of the hairpin bends, about 700 m west of Montview Road in Hornsby Heights.

7. Tunks Ridge

This bush camp ground is situated on the Great North Walk on top of Tunks Ridge in a pleasant woodland setting. The area has small clearings for three or four small tents, and wooden seats. Drinking water is not available. The site is approached only on foot along fire trails about 5 km from Dural or Hornsby, as shown in Walk 7: *Heritage Bridges*, or up the very steep bush track about 700 m from the car park near the Galston Gorge bridge over Berowra Creek. The only evidence of civilisation at night is the faint noise of cars negotiating the hairpin bends in Galston Gorge.

8. Crosslands Reserve

Crosslands Reserve is a major recreation reserve and the best-equipped of the picnic places within the Park. The extensive open grassed areas, surrounded by tall gums, are popular with families for picnics and games on fine weekends throughout the year. The area is well maintained by Council, which provides children's playground equipment, tap water, barbecues, picnic tables, bins, toilets and parking for many cars. It is a recognised camping ground on the Great North Walk. Group camping is possible but requires prior booking with Hornsby Council.

Access is by car down a partially sealed road, starting at a gate (locked at night) at the northern end of Somerville Road at Hornsby Heights. Alternatively, access is on foot along the Great North Walk, from Galston Gorge (6 km to the south) or from Berowra or Mt Kuring-gai Railway Stations (see Walk 8: *Lyrebird Gully*) about 6 km to the north and west.

Berowra Creek is broad and tidal at Crosslands. It is popular for fishing and provides excellent canoeing at high tide for many kilometres upstream to Rocky Fall

Rapids and downstream over the sandflats to Berowra Waters. Visitors do swim at Crosslands, but should be aware of potential risk from algae or stormwater pollution at certain times. Council rangers display signs when significant risks occur. Across the Creek are a private Field Studies Centre and a Scout Camp.

9. Barnetts Reserve, Berowra

This site is high over Berowra Creek Valley and has superb views downstream to Berowra Waters and upstream to Crosslands. It is accessible from the western end of Barnetts Road in Berowra Heights. A short walk of about 150 m from the carpark through a quiet and pretty woodland reserve leads to the panoramic

views. Wooden tables and water are provided for picnickers, plus disabled access pathway.

10. Berowra Waters

Picnic tables, electric barbecues, tap water, bins and toilets are available near the boat-launching ramp on the western side of Berowra Waters. Access is by car along Galston Road from Galston or across the car ferry from the Hornsby side of Berowra Creek. Access on foot to the eastern side of the car ferry is along the Great North Walk. Restaurants, take-away food shops, scenic river cruises and boat hire are available here. This is a popular area, especially on summer weekends, when it can sometimes be difficult to find a car parking spot, and when the ferry queues may be long.



Jennifer Lewis

Adjoining the northern extremities of the Park is the popular haven of Berowra Waters, also favoured as an exclusive water-access-only hideaway and residential location. Berowra ferry links the steep hairpin curves of the original and narrow Berowra Road with the less demanding route to Arcadia and Dural. Restaurants, boat hire and maintenance complement the launching, parking, playground and picnic facilities. For boating enthusiasts, Berowra Waters provides access to whole Hawkesbury system.



The natural environment displays extraordinarily fine detail for those who choose to seek it out. Running water created the Berowra Valley and is the fundamental element that drives the wonderful biodiversity of the Park.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LORRAINE BECKETT AN ENTRANT IN HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL'S 2004 PHOTO COMPETITION