ROYAL PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL

WALKING TOUR
Welcome to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital self-guided Walking Tour

This tour circles around the main buildings of the Hospital travelling along Missenden Road, down Gloucester House Drive, around Lambie Dew Drive and up Johns Hopkins Drive. It is about 1.5k long and will take approximately 60 minutes – more if visitors want to stop at the Museum and have a look around.

Please stay on the footpaths as much as possible or on the side of the road, especially along Lambie Dew Drive at the back of the Hospital where it is best to stay on the University-side of the drive. Also, be mindful of uneven ground and downward slopes. There are also some steps at different places on the walk.

There are several benches and places to rest along the walk. Refreshments can be purchased on both Levels 4 and 5 of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital where there are two cafes – the former overlooking the beautiful Jacaranda tree and garden behind Gloucester House. Ask at the Enquiries Desk for directions. There are also cafes and shops along Missenden Road to the North of the Hospital site.

If there are any questions, the Museum Curator, can help.

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Guided tours can be arranged. Contact the Museum for more information. The cost is $5/person

This tour can be linked to the “Medical Heritage Trail”. Visit: www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/museum/
The attempted assassination of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, the second son of Queen Victoria, marred the Australian visit of a member of the Royal Family. On 12th March 1868, while attending a picnic at Clontarf on Sydney’s north, Prince Alfred was shot in the back by Henry James O’Farrell a self-proclaimed Fenian fighting “for the wrongs of Ireland”. The assailant was swiftly overpowered by a member of the crowd, William Vial, but not before a second shot was fired into the foot of an onlooker.

The Prince was transferred, via HMS Morpeth, to Government House and was attended to by Dr Watson, Surgeon of HMS Challenger. Two days later the bullet was extracted by Dr Young of HMS Galatea with a special golden probe crafted for the procedure.

Public meetings were soon held around Sydney and its citizens quickly resolved to construct the “Prince Alfred Memorial Hospital”. The money raised was originally to go to the Sydney Infirmary but because of land restrictions a new site was sought.

In 1872 the Senate of the University of Sydney granted land from the former Grose Farm for the erection of the hospital, which would serve as a teaching hospital for the University’s Medical School and for the training of nurses.

The foundation stone was laid on 4 April 1873 and the hospital officially opened on 25 September 1882.
This is one of only two buildings extant from the original Hospital. Although the Hospital opened in 1882, the Administration Block was not ready for use until 1884.

Inside you will see several beautiful stained-glass windows and busts of prominent RPA men from the late 19th and early 20th century. There is also a bust of Florence Nightingale which was relocated to this spot from the Queen Mary Nurses’ Home in 2005. Feel free to walk in and have a look around.

In addition to the administrative offices and quarters for the medical and nursing staff, the building originally housed the medical library, the outpatients department, a dispensary, a waiting room for patients requesting admission or for their visitors and two beds for accident cases.

Originally a large wooden staircase sat in the centre of the foyer and was staffed by the Hall Porter, Mr James Crombie, who held the post for 22 years. His job was to monitor all comings and goings and to keep track of which physicians and surgeons were on duty.
Outside the building, on the southern end, there was a high paling fence with wooden gates leading to a carriageway with gaslight lamps at the entrance and the porter’s lodge on the right. The wooden fence was replaced by a stone wall in the 1890s and then by a small dwarf wall with stone posts. The front gardens have always been a source of pride for the Hospital. The tall palms that grew from seeds brought back by Corporal Sandy Wilson from the South African War have long since gone but other trees and shrubs had taken their place. (However, one of the seeds is thought to have been planted at the bottom of Johns Hopkins Drive and the palm is still standing.) Hopefully the gardens will once again be beautiful when the building works are completed.

The front vestibule has two granite stones: on the right the foundation stone and on the left a stone reading, “and now abideth, Faith, Hope and Charity these three but the greatest of these is Charity”. A translation of the foundation stone is available in the Museum.
The original design of the Hospital included two pavilions to face Missenden Road but this project was delayed for lack of funds. The resulting lack of sufficient patient accommodation proved to be a constant embarrassment to the Hospital. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 provided the impetus for a public fundraising effort and the Queen Victoria and Prince Albert Memorial Pavilion Wards were officially opened in 1904. The foundation stone can be seen on the Vic Block, near the Administration Block. The buildings were designed by Government Architect Colonel W.L. Vernon.

Known around the Hospital as A-Block and Vic-Block, these buildings have been used by many departments over the years. The top two floors of A-Block housed nurses until 1914 and returned soldiers until 1926. The Accident and Emergency Department was added to the ground floor of A-Block in the 1970s, but in such a manner that it barely changed the face of the building as it was to be a temporary structure.
Notice the pediments of each wing and you will see Prince Albert and Queen Victoria looking to the horizon. These statues, each nine feet in height and made of hammered copper, were made by sculptor James White of Annandale and are original to the building. One might also notice the Prince of Wales coat of arms on the front of Vic Block. This was moved to this location circa 1901 from the Southern side of the Administration Block.
The use of laboratory science in medicine has expanded greatly since 1882. The original Hospital plans provided for a pathologist who was remembered as an “obscurer person in the dead house, whose chief duty was to...discover whether the deceased had died by fair means or foul” (Schlink 1943).

Many ad hoc arrangements failed to meet the demand for more and more laboratory tests. Finally, in 1941 an £8000 legacy from Miss Charles Fairfax provided a seed grant to build the Fairfax Institute of Pathology, “in honour of the family which had so closely associated itself with the hospital since its beginning”.

As you walk down Gloucester House Drive, notice that the rear of the Fairfax has a slightly different brick laying pattern and colour. This is a remnant of the original Vic Block brick work.
At the end of Gloucester House Drive, one will see a light-coloured building – Gloucester House and in front of it a statue of the ancient Egyptian doctor, Imhotep who, in the eyes of Sir William Osler, was “the first Figure of a Physician to stand out clearly from the mists of antiquity”.

A polymath, Imhotep also excelled in architecture, philosophy and poetry. The statue, in bronze, is the work of Stephan Pokora and is a copy of versions found in the Louvre and University College, London. It is special as it shows the papyrus open and being read. In the words of Sir Herbert Schlink, chairman of the RPA Board of Directors, “… may the contemplation of this Statue awaken a spirit of humility, the desire for research and learning and a forgetfulness of the sordid bartering side of modern life”.

Gloucester House was opened in 1936 as an “Intermediate Ward” (i.e. private – the first in Australia) by Sir Murray Anderson, NSW Governor. Sadly it was the only official public function performed by him. He died only a few weeks into his term of office. The dedication plates, in cast bronze, are set in the flanking walls of the Entrance Porch, with Hawkesbury stone surrounds. It is a fine example of functionalist architecture and was the first major Stephenson Meldrum & Turner building at RPA. Have a peek through the art-deco style front door and see the original terrazzo flooring.
To the left and around the back of Gloucester House, one finds a lovely grassed area with a huge Jacaranda tree in the centre. This is the beginning of Lambie Dew Drive, named for the first Bosch Professors of Surgery and Medicine, Harold Dew and Charles Lambie, respectively. This area is now the location of RPA’s main loading dock. The gardens were originally designed to have Summer and Winter sections. Years ago there were tennis courts and a solarium (for Paediatric patients) along this drive.

On the right is the Blackburn Building re-named in 1960 in honour of University Chancellor Sir Charles Blackburn, originally called the Rockefeller Building, as it was funded by Rockefeller money. It is part of the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Medicine and for years was connected to the Hospital by an elevated walkway. You may see remnants of this on the back of the building where the bricks are discoloured around the window and there is a sign reading, “Entrance to the Medical School”.

The new Clinical Services Block, completed in 2003, overlooks Lambie Dew Drive. This was the site of the original Nightingale-style pavilion wards, C and D Blocks. They opened in 1882 but were demolished in the 1970s to make way for E (Edinburgh) Block, the large, yellow brick building behind the Administration Block, visible from Missenden Road.
The Prince Alfred Hospital presented a unique opportunity to build a clean and well-designed hospital, staffed with trained nurses. Sir Alfred Roberts, Secretary of the Hospital planning committee, and Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary in NSW, appealed to Florence Nightingale for help. Previously, Roberts had asked to have “Nightingale Nurses” come to NSW to ‘abolish the scourge of the unsanitary Sydney Infirmary’. This proved somewhat successful. Nightingale had many suggestions for Roberts on the subject of the Prince Alfred Hospital, and sent him a copy of her newly-published (1860) Notes on Nursing: What it is and What it is Not, as well as other publications.

Traditionally, hospitals had a reputation as filthy, vermin-infested buildings, and nurses were untrained women of the ‘lower classes’, barely fit to care for themselves, let alone patients. This situation was magnified in the colonies, where hospitals were often staffed by ‘lay married couples’ with no training at all. In contrast, Nightingale Nurses were ‘trained in science, strictly disciplined, attentive to cleanliness and had an innate empathy for their patients’. She believed in miasmas - bad air that could cause infections to spontaneously arise in dirty and poorly ventilated places. Her Pavilion wards were the practical manifestation of this belief. The Hospital’s two original wards – C-Block and D-Block - were built in this pavilion style. They were long, airy and bright 32-bed wards.
Beside the Blackburn Building is the third Hospital Chapel, opened in July 1955. Attached to the chapel and no longer in use is a viewing room. There is a tunnel connecting it to the old Post Mortem Room in the basement of the Blackburn Building. Post Mortems (now rarely required) are no longer done on site but are carried out at the nearby City Morgue.

The Chapel was designed by Stephenson and Turner and built by William Ward. Meant initially for use by the medical and nursing staff, it was styled as a simplified version of a modern church and was designed to meet the requirements of all denominations. Originally there were two altars, divided by an attractive black wrought-iron screen, the main one, for Protestant services, and a smaller one to the left, used for Roman Catholic services. Over the years there have been many memorial services held in the Chapel as well a couple of weddings!

Feel free to go inside and look at the dedication plaques on the walls. The stained glass windows depict the Beatitudes. If you are here on a Thursday at lunch time, you might have the pleasure of hearing the Hospital Choir practising.
Built in 1880, the Pathology Building is an original PA building. It was placed at the rear of the Hospital and made as hidden as possible behind trees and shrubs. A gravel pathway led to the front door above which there is a lovely stone design done by a Mr Appleby. It reads: “In caelo quis” – “there is rest in heaven”.

By 1905 this building was too small and an addition was added behind it. In that year, 823 microscopic investigations were carried out and this doubled to 1670 in 1906. By 1910 there was so much pathological work to be done that medical students were called upon to help. Around to the left of the building on the side of the 1905 addition, there is a plaque that reads: “Erected, 1880 AR; Enlarged 1905 AS”. “AR” was the original Hospital Secretary Alfred Roberts and “AS” is Anderson Stuart, Chairman of the Board of Directors.

The building is still used by the laboratory services but temporarily housed the John Belisario Institute of Dermatology in 1959.

The Isolation unit once stood to the left (North) of the Mortuary. It was built in 1928 for “patients who during their stay contracted any disease of an infectious or offensive character”. Some infectious cases were transferred to the Coast Hospital (Prince Henry) or the Children’s Hospital. The building was later used by the Department of Anaesthetics.
At the Northern end of the campus is Johns Hopkins Drive, so named for the thirty-six medical officers of the Johns Hopkins University Hospital who were given the whole of the psychiatry building (demolished in 2011) for their use during WWII. This was the 118th American General Hospital. It was available for US Servicemen who became injured or ill and provided a bit of excitement for RPA nurses who lived nearby in the Nurses’ Home or the hut which had been built in 1943 to provide extra accommodation for trainee nurses. The huts were located on the border between the Hospital and St Johns College, where a car park now sits and were impractical as they were boiling in summer and freezing in winter and surrounded by swampy grounds. However, the nurses who lived there apparently enjoyed the freedom of their own space. Before the arrival of the Americans this road was known as “Tin Lane”, perhaps for the fence of corrugated iron on the St Johns College boundary.

On the corner of Johns Hopkins Drive and Lambie Dew Drive you will notice a “grassy knoll” with an Aboriginal-themed garden. This was the site of the 1936 Nurses Home, a nine storey, 191 bedroom building.
At the top of the grassy knoll there is a small car park and the entrance to RPA Women and Babies. This Hospital opened in 2002 when, after 61 years and over 260,000 births, the King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies relocated all its services to this site. The beautiful marble statue “Maternal Affection”, which stood in the foyer of KGV from 1951, moved too and can now be seen on the ground floor of Women and Babies, just outside the lifts. Feel free to walk in and have a look at it.
Beside the entrance to RPA Women and Babies there is an arched brick wall overlooking the Nurses’ Courtyard. The entrance is at the end of the wall. This quadrangle was once enclosed by the 1892 and 1910 Nurses’ Homes. It was, and still is, a delightful resting place for nurses. It was originally laid out as a Spanish garden, with palms, shrubs and a few small flower beds. The fountain in the centre was donated in 1914 by Samuel Hordern of the Anthony Hordern and Sons Department Store.

On one side of the courtyard there is a glass and steel modern building – the Kerry Packer Education Centre. Visitors can enter the ground floor and proceed to the Susman Library on the right. In the entrance hallway there is a portrait of the Dr Eric Susman, after whom the library is named. Beyond, there are four plaques depicting scenes from Shakespeare and around the corner are 27 small, round plaques featuring the facial profiles of important RPA doctors and administrators from the 1940s and 1950s. These are all the works of Andor Meszaros.

On exiting the Library visitors can go up to Level 4. Here you will find the ground floor hallway of the 1892 Nurses’ Home. As you approach the beautiful stained-glass exit doors you will notice the VMO Lounge on your left and the R.L. Harris Room down the hall to your right. Both of these spaces are used for formal RPA functions.

At the exit of the Nurses’ Home there is another small courtyard with picnic tables.
Back to Johns Hopkins drive and towards Missenden Road, one will see another Stephenson and Turner Building at the corner. This rounded building was originally known as “the Boot” or the Boutique. It was built in 1939 amid much fanfare: “Here anything may be purchased from a needle to a camel and patients and nurses, and all those in daily association with the hospital – in round figures about 2000 – may buy their needs without the inconvenience of leaving the hospital grounds.” It was originally run by members of the RPA Auxiliary (with help from paid cooks) and all profits went to the Hospital for “for the provision of linen and additional equipment needed by the Hospital”.

The Boutique ran for about 50 years and since has been a bank and now a café.

Outside the Boutique on Johns Hopkins Drive there once stood a turnstile for visitors to pass through and pay for admission to the Hospital. Imagine paying to visit your friends or relatives!

Across from the Boutique is a light-coloured brick building and at the top of this is another sample of Andor Meszaros’s work – a circular plaque showing “strength aiding weakness”. The building, originally a stores building belonging to the County Council, was transferred to the Hospital in the 1950s and re-opened as the Rehabilitation Centre in 1959. It offered physical and occupational therapy for the “Civilian Maimed and Limbless”.

Stop 11
Opened in 1941, KGV became the first Maternity Hospital in NSW to be attached to a General Hospital. It was designed by Stephenson & Turner who were awarded the Sulman Medal in the category of outstanding public or monumental building for their efforts. The Medal celebrated excellence in design and street architecture. Outside the building, there are several statues and works of art. In the northern grassed courtyard stands “Maternity”, at the front entrance is “King George V” and at the southern end, one will find “The Surgeon”. All three were made by Andor Meszaros in the 1940s. Maternity and the Surgeon are made from Hawkesbury sandstone and King George V from Queensland white marble which required special tungsten chisels.

Meszaros was a Hungarian sculptor who left his home country in 1939 and settled in Melbourne. He was introduced to Herbert Schlink, Chairman of the RPA Board of Directors by Architect Stephenson and it proved to be a fruitful introduction. Meszaros’s most prominent commission was perhaps the medals of the 1956 Olympic Games.

Hidden behind several tall trees on the front face of the building, one will see identical mural plaques on either side of the front entrance. These are “Bambini” and “Mother and Baby”. The former is a copy of a 15th century Della Robbia mural situated at the Foundling Hospital in Florence. Both the KGV murals were made by Danish sculptor Otto Steen.
The RPA Museum can be found on the 8th floor of the KGV Building where it moved in 2005 after 45 years in the Queen Mary Nurses’ Home. It is now situated in the striking (former) gynaecological theatres.

It is home to photographs, records and artefacts related to the Hospital’s history from 1868 to the present. There is large collection of medical and surgical instruments and equipment as well as nursing uniforms and badges. Some of the more recent displays feature the development of neonatology at RPA and the lives of nurses from times past when they lived and trained on-site.

The Museum is open to the public Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 2pm. Admission is free. For more information visit the website: http://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/rpa/museum or ring 9515 9201.
Beside KGV stood the Page Chest Pavilion, named after the Minister for Health, Sir Earle Page. It opened in 1957 ironically just after Tuberculosis was well and truly under control thanks to antibiotic treatments and improved living conditions. However the building was used for cardio-thoracic surgery including the implantation of pace-makers, respiratory medicine and biomedical engineering. The site is now occupied by the Chris O’Brien Lifehouse, a private not-for-profit private cancer hospital that opened in 2013.

Behind KGV, until the 1980s, stood an entire neighbourhood, once part of Camperdown. The Hospital started to acquire land in this area in the 1950s with the view for future developments. In 1984 Carillon Avenue was connected to Salisbury Road by changing the path of the latter.

*Top Extension to Carillon Avenue, 1984 (Missenden Road in foreground.)*

*Bottom: Examples of houses behind King George V Building*
Top: RPA Campus, 2007
Middle: RPA Campus, 1978
Bottom: Lifehouse at RPA, 2015
Transport

There is limited onsite parking, but visitors may find spots in the King George V Car Park for a fee. There are also some spots available on Missenden Road and Carillon Avenue, but these are either time-limited or metered. Visitors could also find parking a bit farther away on one of the surrounding residential streets. Alternately, the Museum is well-serviced by public transport. Visitors can travel to the intersection of Missenden Road and King Street Newtown via buses: M30, 428, L28, 426, L26, 423, L23, 422, 370 or 352. Buses travelling to the intersection of Missenden Road and Parramatta Road include 435, 436, 437, 438, 440, L40, 461, 480 and 483. Bus 412 passes directly in front of the Hospital.

The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Museum sincerely thanks the City of Sydney, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, the city’s grant department and its historian for their assistance in completing this project. The Museum was awarded a City of Sydney Local Community Grant, which contributed the majority of the funding for this project.