

# Bowral Walk



*Bong Bong Street, Bowral, 1900 (BDHS)*

A self-guided walking tour  
of the historic town of  
Bowral in the  
Southern Highlands of NSW



**Distance:** 3km (approx.); 4.5km with Bradman extension  
**Duration:** 1.5 hours (approx.); 2 hours with Bradman extension

Bowral, in the heart of the Southern Highlands, was first settled as early as 1816 by stock and stockmen sent by John Oxley, explorer and surveyor general of NSW. In 1823, Oxley was granted 2,400 acres near the present town of Bowral called 'Weston' (which was probably a misspelling of Westow where Oxley was born). After Oxley's untimely death in 1828, a further 4,200 acres—including what is today Bowral—as well as an additional 800 acres between Bowral and Berrima, was granted to his sons, John Norton Oxley and Henry Molesworth Oxley, but the deeds were not issued until 1855. In 1857 Henry built the first home in Bowral, a grand homestead called 'Wingecarribbee' on the slopes of Oxley's Hill. Subdivision of their land began soon after in anticipation of the arrival of the railway. Once the railway in Bowral was opened in 1867 the development of the town began in earnest.

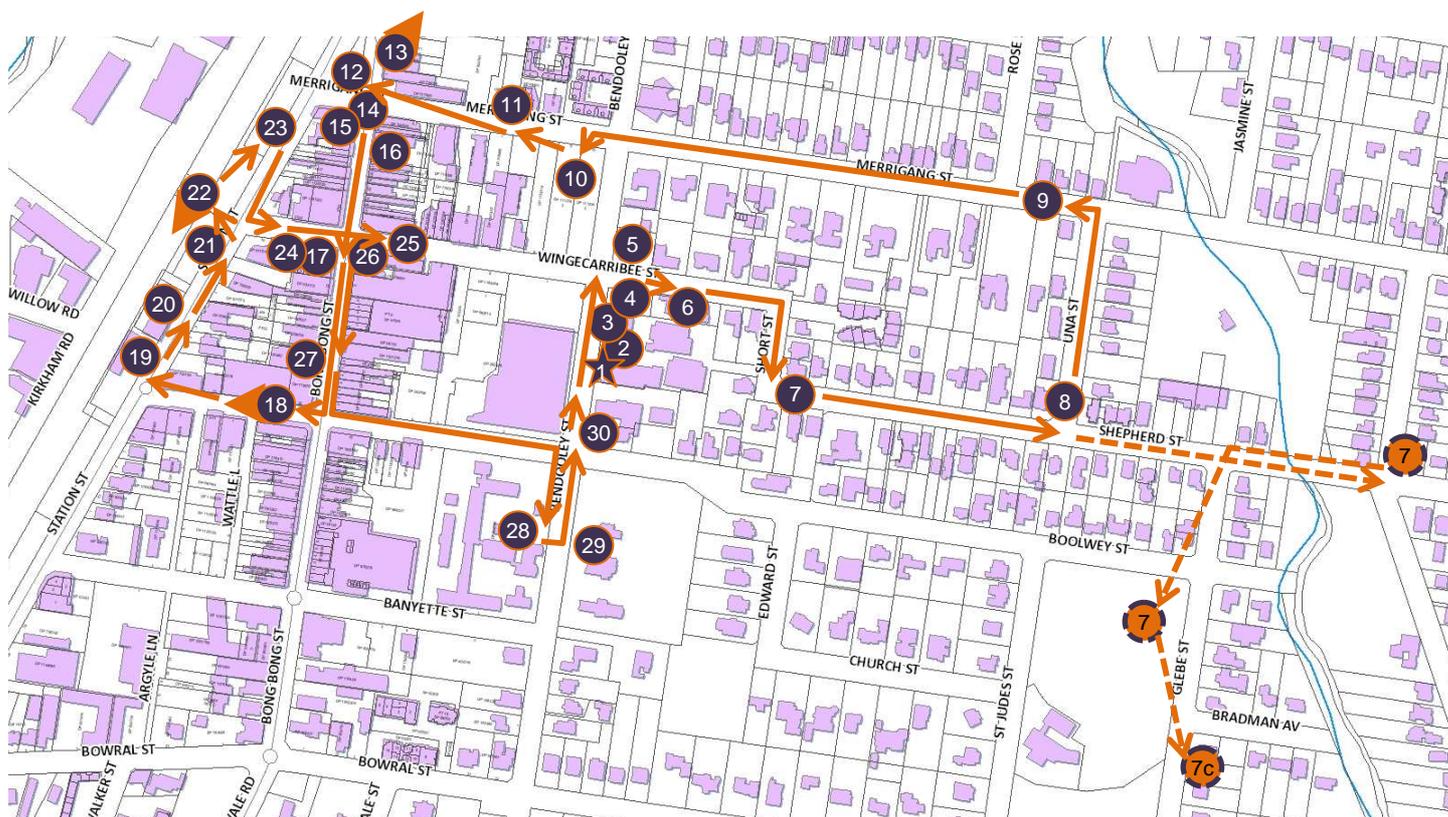
This walk was developed by Wingecarribbee Shire Council in the year of Bowral's sesquicentenary in 2013. It focuses on the historic central commercial, residential and civic areas of the town and its history. Most of the properties on this walk are in private ownership and should only be viewed from public spaces. Please do not enter private property without the prior permission of the owner.

The following sources are acknowledged in the production of this walk and brochure:

- ▶ Bowral Sesquicentenary Logo created by and used with permission of Margaret J. Mapperson.
- ▶ Berrima District Historical and Family History Society (BDHS).
- ▶ Emery, Linda, 2008. Pictorial History Southern Highlands. Kingsclear Books, Alexandria.
- ▶ Jervis, James, 1986. A History of the Berrima District 1798-1973. Third impression, Library of Australian History.
- ▶ Lemann, Jane. The Gib: Mount Gibraltar Southern Highlands. Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare, Moss Vale.



Please contact Council's Heritage Land Use Planner on (02) 4868 0830 to report any historical inaccuracies in this brochure.



#### Map of Points of Interest

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. School of Arts &amp; Hall</li> <li>2. Stafford Cottage</li> <li>3. Bowral Town Hall</li> <li>4. Bowral Court House</li> <li>5. St Andrews Church &amp; Hall</li> <li>6. Bowral Police Station</li> <li>7. Shepherd Street</li> <li>7a. George Bradman House</li> <li>7b. Bradman Oval &amp; Cricket Hall of Fame</li> <li>7c. Bradman House</li> <li>8. Una Street</li> <li>9. Merrigang Street</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Corbett Gardens</li> <li>11. Bowral Fire Station</li> <li>12. War Memorial Park</li> <li>13. Mount Gibraltar: 'The Gib' (view to)</li> <li>14. Bong Bong Street</li> <li>15. Royal Hotel</li> <li>16. Post Office</li> <li>17. The Grand Hotel</li> <li>18. 'Wingecarribbee' (view to)</li> <li>19. Milk Factory Building</li> <li>20. Co-op Building</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. Former Station Master's Cottage</li> <li>22. Bowral Brickworks (view to)</li> <li>23. Railway Station</li> <li>24. Old Stables</li> <li>25. Corbett Plaza</li> <li>26. Commonwealth Bank</li> <li>27. Empire Cinema</li> <li>28. Bowral Public School</li> <li>29. St Simon &amp; St Jude's Church, Hall &amp; Rectory</li> <li>30. Uniting Church</li> </ul> |
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► *The walking tour begins in Bendooley Street outside the School of Arts building in what is known as the Bowral Civic Precinct.*

### 1. School of Arts & Hall 24 Bendooley Street

Built in 1884 as a single storey building, the School of Arts operated a library here from 1888 until 1945 when the library service was taken over by Bowral Council. The building was extended with an upper storey in 1913 and Council took over the building in 1938. The Memorial Hall was added in 1961 and the portico in 1989. Council is currently examining options to convert the building and hall into a performance centre.



*The School of Arts c.1884*

### 2. Stafford Cottage 22 Bendooley Street

Stafford Cottage was originally a house probably built just after the arrival of the railway in Bowral in 1867 and therefore predates the School of Arts and Town Hall. The building is now owned by Council and used for community purposes.

### 3. Bowral Town Hall 16 Bendooley Street

The Town Hall was built in 1889 following the proclamation of Bowral as a municipality and the gazetting of the Bowral Municipal Council in 1886. It was used as a municipal building and Council Chambers until the amalgamation of Bowral, Mittagong and Wingecarribee Shires in 1981 and in 1983 the Council Chambers were used as the Bowral Library until 1999 when the Bowral Central Library was completed.

### 4. Bowral Court House 14 Bendooley Street

Built in 1895 from Bowral trachyte (from Mt Gibraltar) and sandstone, the design of this Romanesque style building is attributed to Walter Liberty Vernon, government architect at the time and who designed the Sydney Land Titles Office, the NSW Art Gallery and Sydney Central Station. The Court ceased operations here in 2005 and the building is now in private ownership.

► *Cross to the opposite corner of Wingecarribee Street.*

### 5. St Andrews Church & Hall 12 Bendooley Street

Presbyterian services were first recorded in Bowral in 1884 and were conducted from various sites in Bowral. A church was built circa 1890 in Boolwey Street and moved twice before being moved to this site and converted to a hall three years after the brick church on the site was built in 1954. The lych gate dates from 1919 and is called the Rutherford Gate.

► *Turn back toward the Court House and turn left into Wingecarribee Street.*

### 6. Bowral Police Station 53-55 Wingecarribee Street

A police station and lock-up was established on this site on completion of the building in 1887, but Bowral had had a policeman since 1882. The station was expanded next door in 1931 and the main police operations moved to the new building. The original police station is still used as part of the police operations, as is the neighbouring cottage, which is a police residence.

► *Follow the bend around to Shepherd Street.*

## 7. Shepherd Street

Shepherd Street was named by and for Patrick Lindsay Crawford Shepherd who subdivided this land in 1886 and was described in the newspapers of the day as the 'Upper Bowral subdivision'. The street contains a fine example of a Victorian weatherboard cottage at no. 1 and other homes in a range of styles.

► *Turn left into Una Street or continue straight ahead to the Bradman side tour (see dotted box below).*

### **Bradman tour extension**

#### 7a. George Bradman House 52 Shepherd Street

The Bradman family lived in this house from the time Don was 3 until he was 15 (1911 to 1924). It was in the backyard of this house that Don Bradman honed his cricketing skills by playing balls bounced from the timber paling fence and the water tank stand. The house has recently undergone a heritage restoration to look like as it did when the photo below was taken in 1914.



*Don Bradman aged 3 outside the Shepherd Street house (BDHS)*

#### 7b. Bradman Oval & Bradman International Cricket Hall of Fame

Formerly The Glebe Wicket, Bradman first played here in 1920, for the Bowral Cricket Club filling in for an absent team member when Don was 12. He score 29 not out. It was also at this oval in 1925 that Don scored a memorable 234 runs in an afternoon against Wingello and their star bowler, Bill O'Reilly.

#### 7c. Bradman House 20 Glebe Street

Don's father, George, built this house and the family moved from Shepherd Street in 1924. Don Bradman lived here until he moved to Sydney in 1928. The Bradman Foundation now owns the house and have restored its exterior.

► *Retrace your steps to return to the walk at Una Street.*

## 8. Una Street

Una Street is part of P.L.C. Shepherd's 'Upper Bowral subdivision' and was named for his wife, Sarah Jane Una Shepherd. The street contains a mix of housing styles ranging from Victorian, Federation, Interwar and beyond, providing a glimpse of its earliest settlement and development since.

► *Turn left into Merrigang Street.*

## 9. Merrigang Street

The name of 'Merrigang', like many of the streets in Bowral has Aboriginal origins and was given by J.N. and H.M. Oxley. Merrigang, according to Oxley, was named for the native dog that lived in the surrounding hills. Merrigang Street contains a number of fine houses and the street itself is renowned for its spring blossoms, mainly Prunus species. Houses of note are:

Brahan Bank (no. 57-59)—Originally a boys' school, Brahan Bank was built in 1880 and has been used for visitor accommodation and is now a private residence.

Laurel House (no. 47)—Built circa 1860, this weatherboard homestead built retains much original detailing. The garden is also significant as a fine Victorian era garden.

Weston Green (no. 41)—Built circa 1873 it is a fine example of a Victorian house with high aesthetic quality.

Jubilee Villas (no. 50 opposite side)—One of only a few examples of a pair of Victorian two storey freestanding terraces in the Southern Highlands, these have been recently renovated.

Cedar House (no. 29-31)—A Victorian house that dates from circa 1875, the house is on a large block that has retained its original context.

Withycombe (no 25-27)—Built in 1875 for the Shepherd family (P.L.C. Shepherd owned and subdivided much of the surrounding land) it was acquired in 1878 by the Commercial Banking Company for a manager's residence. Also used as luxury accommodation, it's perhaps best known locally for its long association with a number of prominent local doctors. It is now a private residence.

► *Cross Bendooley Street and enter Corbett Gardens.*

#### 10. Corbett Gardens 21 Merrigang Street

Proclaimed a park in 1911 and named after Ada Corbett who lobbied for the land known as Denmead's Paddock to be acquired for a public park. Ada also fundraised for beautification of the park and the construction of a bandstand. The original bandstand, which was very small, was dismantled and replaced with the current bandstand. (The original exists in a private garden in Burradoo.) The Gardens are a focus for the annual Tulip Time spring festival—celebrated since around 1961—where people travel long distances to view the gardens in bloom.

► *Continue along Merrigang Street.*

#### 11. Bowral Fire Station 16 Merrigang Street

This land was bought in 1894 and a building erected for a fire station. The current building was opened in November 1925.

► *Cross Bong Bong Street to the War Memorial Park.*

#### 12. War Memorial Park Bong Bong Street

A proposal to erect a memorial to Bowral soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses who took part in World War I was made in December 1918. Designed by local architect Harry Sheaffe, the memorial's foundation stone was laid on 4 August 1919 and the memorial, made from Bowral trachyte, was unveiled by the Governor, Sir Walter Davidson on 20 January 1920 (see photo in next column).



*Bong Bong Street looking south from the War Memorial Park c.1920 (BDHS)*

#### 13. Mt Gibraltar: 'The Gib' (view to)

Mt Gibraltar, or 'The Gib' as it affectionately known, overlooks Bowral from the north and has strong association with the traditional owners of the land, the Gundungurra people. In 1885 quarrying of its unique rock, known as trachyte, commenced and by the 1890s there were several companies operating quarries. Trachyte, has been used for kerbing, memorials and buildings locally, in other parts of Australia and overseas including the National Library in

Canberra, the Cape Byron Lighthouse, and Australia House in London. Local pressure led to the closure of the last quarry in 1980 and the land was incorporated into the Mount Gibraltar Reserve. The quarries complex on the Gib was listed on the State Heritage Register in 2013.

► *Turn around and walk south along Bong Bong Street.*

#### 14. Bong Bong Street

The main commercial street of Bowral, Bong Bong Street contains a number of historic building and traditional façades.

#### 15. Royal Hotel 255-261 Bong Bong Street

Built in 1878 by William Henry Riley, he used the hotel to host many early local land sales during the 1880s. The hotel can be partially seen in the photo above, on the right. Its façade, including its upper level verandah and original hipped roof, was substantially altered, mainly in 1970.

#### 16. Post Office 260-266 Bong Bong Street



*An early view of the Bowral Post Office showing the clock (BDHS)*

The first post office on this site was built in 1887 and extended to the street in 1908. The two storey building, which is said to have been the oldest post office in the Southern Highlands, was demolished in 1988 and replaced with a single storey building. Only the clock from the old post office remains.

#### 17. The Grand Hotel 295-297 Bong Bong Street

Opened in 1888 this was once the most elegant of the hotels in town. Although there is still a tavern called The Grand Hotel, the building has been converted into shops and an arcade.

► *Cross Wingecarribee Street and continue along Bong Bong Street, then turn right into Boolwey Street.*

#### 18. 'Wingecarribee' (view to)

As you look toward Oxley's Hill you might be able to see a pale roof about half-way up the hill. This is 'Wingecarribee' (spelled this way by the Oxleys). Built in 1857 by Henry Molesworth Oxley—second son of explorer and Surveyor-General, John Oxley—the house was ordered from a foundry in Bristol, England, which specialised in prefabricated houses, and was shipped in its entirety (including roof, frame, doors, windows, shutters and screws and bolts) in crates. Many of its interiors including blinds and curtains were included in the package and still exist. The house is still owned by relations-by-marriage of the Oxley family and the house and gardens have been restored.



*'Wingecarribee' in the late 19th century (BDHS)*

► Turn right into Station Street.

### 19. Milk Factory Building 33-37 Station Street

Bowral District milk started being transported to Sydney via the train from 1876. After operating a factory and siding in Mittagong for some time, the NSW Fresh Food and Ice Company (FF&I) built this milk factory equipped with modern refrigeration units and successfully operated it until the late 1940s, when it was bought by Peters Milk. The milk factory ceased operation some time ago and more recently the building has been converted into an art gallery. While the front façade has changed considerably, the building still retains its industrial heritage and was the Overall Winner of the 2009 Wingecarribee Heritage Awards.



*The rear of the Berrima Co-op butter factory (to left of photo) next to the FF&I factory, 1930s (BDHS)*

### 20. Co-op Building 31 Station Street

The Berrima District Farm and Dairy Company was formed in 1895 as a local farmer's co-operative. In mid-1895 this new company acquired the former FF&I Company factory at Nattai (Mittagong) and made it a central butter factory for the district. In 1924, butter operations were transferred here as a new central butter factory and distribution centre. (See photos above and in next column.)



*The FF&I Milk Factory c.1921 (BDHS)*

### 21. Former Station Master's Cottage 25-29 Station Street

Built in 1870 as a residence for the Station Master at the new Bowral Railway Station, the cottage is typical of similar railway buildings of the late Victorian period. It has been recently renovated and is now used as health consulting rooms.

► Cross Wingecarribee Street and walk to the middle of the railway bridge.

### 22. Bowral Brickworks (view from bridge)

The brickworks was started in 1921-22 by F. Baker & Sons and has been an important part of Bowral's life since then. There are few remaining buildings and structures from the brickwork's early days, but the chimney has been a Bowral landmark for nearly a century. In the early days the chimney was visible from the Hume Highway near Bankstown with the help of binoculars and fine weather. The brickworks are known for their high quality dry pressed bricks, called Bowral Bricks, unique to Bowral as the clay is also sourced at the site. Such brickworks are now extremely rare in Australia.

► Descend the stairs to the Railway Station.

### 23. Railway Station Station Street

The Mittagong-Moss Vale section of the railway was opened on 2 December 1867 (Mittagong having been connected with Picton nine months earlier). The building of the railway changed the nature of the towns of the Southern Highlands. It gave local producers access to the Sydney markets and opened up the area to tourism. Built in 1870, the main (southbound) platform building is the oldest, with the northbound building added in 1890. The buildings are in excellent condition and look much like they did in the late 1800s.

► Cross Station Street and continue along Wingecarribee Street

### 24. Old Stables 5 Wingecarribee Street

Built circa 1860, this building was originally a stables and evidence of its former use can be seen on the side wall where one of the arched stable entry doors has been bricked up. You can also see the loft which would have also housed accommodation for grooms.

► Cross Bong Bong Street at the pedestrian crossing.

### 25. Corbett Plaza Wingecarribee Street

Corbett Plaza was closed to traffic in the 1980s and is now a popular café and shopping street. The sculpture, designed by local resident and prominent Austrian-born Australian sculptor, Bert Flugelman AM, was unveiled in 2009.

### 26. Commonwealth Bank 294 Bong Bong Street

This site originally housed the English Scottish and Australian (E.S. & A) Bank which was built in 1892. It was bought by the Government Savings Bank of NSW in 1912 who made alterations that resulted in the current building. The Commonwealth Bank has operated on this site since its amalgamation with the Government Savings Bank in 1931. The photo on the front of this brochure shows the bank on the left in 1900.

► Continue along Bong Bong Street.

### 27. Empire Cinema 325-327 Bong Bong Street

Opened on 15 September 1915 the Bowral Empire Cinema is the longest running commercial cinema in Australia. The building façade was altered and its roof lifted circa 1938. Although Bowral, Mittagong and Moss Vale all had theatres at one time or another, the Bowral Empire Theatre is the only surviving operating theatre in the Southern Highlands. The entry was moved from the front to the side in the 1980s.



*Empire Cinema at its opening in 1915 (BDHS)*

► Turn left into Boolwey Street, continue across the roundabout and turn right into Bendooley Street.

**28. Bowral Public School** 47 Bendooley Street

The school was originally built as a church-school as planned by John Norton Oxley (first son of the explorer John Oxley) to serve a dual function until St Jude's Church was built on lands gifted by him for this purpose. The first stone building was built by local residents and opened in 1863 (later demolished in 1895). The building and an acre of surrounding land was sold to the colony's Council of Education in 1867. More buildings were constructed in 1893 and 1897. Cricketer Donald Bradman attended this school from 1913 to 1922.

► *Cross Bendooley Street at the pedestrian crossing.*

**29. St Simon and St Jude's Church, Hall & Rectory** 32-40 Bendooley Street

After the establishment of Bowral in 1859, John Norton Oxley of 'Wingecarribbee' gifted 43 acres to the people of Bowral for a church, rectory and glebe (an area of open land which could be used to support the Rector). With the sale of the church-school to the Council of Education, the Anglican congregation had no fixed place of worship until 1874 when the first church, designed by Edmund Blacket, was dedicated. The congregation quickly outgrew the church and the present church, as well as the neighbouring hall, was commenced in 1886. The bellcote is the only remaining part of Blacket's church. The organ was built by Sydney organ specialist Charles Richardson and was installed in 1900. The neighbouring rectory was built in 1880. The Church, Hall, Rectory and Cemetery retain a lot of their original setting and together with the Primary School, form an important element in the Bendooley streetscape.



*Edmund Blacket's St Simon and St Jude's 1874 (demolished 1886) (BDHS)*

► *Cross Boolwey Street and continue along Bendooley Street.*

**30. Uniting Church** 30 Bendooley Street

The Church dates from 1926 and is a fine but modest example of an Interwar church building. The neighbouring building, formerly a house dating from the Victorian period is also used by the Church.

► *Return to Bowral Civic Precinct.*

***End of walk.***

