



SOUTH HEAD SYDNEY HARBOUR NATIONAL PARK

Conservation Management Plan

Volume 2A and 2B – Inventory of Heritage Items

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Prepared for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water



NSW National Parks
and Wildlife Service



Environment,
Climate Change
& Water

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DESCRIPTION			
<p>The Gap Bluff area is roughly oval in shape with an arm stretching north, and bordered on the west by Cliff Street. The area is edged to the north by HMAS Watson and on the east and south by the 40m towering cliffs, which rise dramatically out of the South Pacific Ocean. The heart of the area is sited on a series of broad vegetated terraces falling towards the west. At the height of its use from the 1950s to 1980s the area accommodated a dense array of masonry and timber structures covering the mostly level north-eastern part of the area interlinked by numerous roads and paths.</p> <p>Although many former building sites were reclaimed and concealed by revegetation after the site was transferred to the NPWS in 1982, the entire precinct contains a wealth of archaeological evidence and a number of standing buildings from both the late 1900s School of Gunnery period and the later, more intensive use during and after WWII. A number of substantial structural remains and large areas of debris from the demolition of the buildings have been identified. Despite the heavy vegetation cover, it is still possible to see the various terraces and understand the arrangement of buildings, roads, equipment and terraced gardens.</p> <p>The surfaces of the cliff lookouts are riddled with evidence of this past military use– the postholes in the rock, markings on the ground were gun emplacements had been, concrete batteries and steps cut into the rocks. The development of the military landscape of training facilities from the 1870s to the 1980s is still readable although the sense of openness and connection between the different areas has been obscured.</p> <p>A number of individual archaeological elements have been located during fieldwork for this CMP and are listed in the Archaeological Table at the beginning of Volume 2. Many of them could not be identified without further documentary research and physical investigation, but are likely to relate to the operation of the 1870s School of Gunnery as well as the WWII and post WWII operation of the Radar and Artillery Schools (see Figure 3.48). A number of smaller archaeological elements associated with operation of the batteries and searchlights spread around the peninsular are likely to be present (such as bases for DRFs) and would add to our understanding of how the larger structural elements worked. Elements located during the preliminary fieldwork included cement slabs, footings and areas of demolition debris associated with former buildings, cement slabs and metal fixings for equipment, garden beds, dry-stone retaining walls, drains and shelter walls. Many of these could not be specifically identified without further research and/or field survey.</p> <p>Other potential archaeological evidence includes: footings, services, artefact deposits, demolition rubble, garden features, equipment platforms, fixings (for the types of activities shown below in Figure 3.49), rock cut features, evidence of fence lines, terraces and walls and the remains of “Engine Room” shown on 1890 Telephone System Chart (reproduced in Mider 1998).</p>			
<p>CONDITION: Good Fair Poor Ruinous Site Only</p>			
<p>INTEGRITY: High Moderate Low</p>		<p>ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL: High Moderate Low</p> <p>See Upper Gap Bluff Archaeological analysis for further details.</p>	
SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>The lookout area along the top of the cliffs at Gap Bluff has high aesthetic and historic values as a rich cultural landscape enriched by its cliff top ocean exposure and sense of isolation from the densely populated city. The dramatic views out to the ocean are important in understanding the historic significance of Gap Bluff as a School of Gunnery from 1984 providing an uninterrupted firing range over the ocean.</p> <p>The aesthetic landscape values share characteristics with many open space areas on Sydney’s headlands including rugged cliffs with projecting sandstone platforms and outcrops, nestling sandy beaches and coastal heath land, all set against a stunning maritime environment. At Gap Bluff these values are enriched by the Aboriginal and subsequent European use of this prominent coastal landform.</p> <p>The Gap Bluff Lookout areas have high archaeological potential. Little historical archaeological assessment has been undertaken in this area to date. Archaeological evidence of the lookouts has high potential to add to our understanding of the military operations carried out in this area and could be used as a focus for site interpretation in the future.</p> <p>Inner South Head (including the Harbour foreshore to Camp Cove Beach, Gap Bluff and Green Point) demonstrates the principal characteristics of Sydney Harbour Foreshore land that has been reserved from private development and utilised for key navigational and defence purposes since 1788. Because of these previous Government uses the NPWS land at South Head and elsewhere within Sydney Harbour National Park is today important for its ability demonstrate the geomorphology of Sydney Harbour and to support native flora and fauna, in addition to its rich cultural heritage.</p>			
High	Moderate	Low	None
		State	Local
Not Assessed			
RISK ASSESSMENT			
Structural	Low	Risk Assessment Summary	
Fire risk	Low		
Wind Loading	Low		
Visitor risk & safety	High risk		
Other			

Gap Bluff Lookouts – Inventory Item 4B.1