TEMPE STATION TO GOUGH WHITLAM PARK VIA THE COOKS RIVER

Overview

The trail from Tempe Railway Station car park to Gough Whitlam Park via the north side of the Cooks River is approximately 2 km long and without stops, takes approximately 1 hour. It is an easy walk.

The trail follows the north bank of the Cooks River through reclaimed parkland and has sections of mangrove forest along the riverside and rocky sandstone outcrops and overhangs away from the water.

There are a number of natural and built features along the walk as well as opportunities to consider heritage features and changes in land use over time.

This section of the Cooks River is tidal and home to fish such as mullet and bream, small crabs and eels though you wouldn't want to eat any—the river's too polluted.

In the past there were kangaroos, echidnas, possums, skinks, insects, snakes, bush rats and mice. We have lost many of these as the bush has been cleared and other exotic animals such as foxes, feral cats and rabbits were introduced.

Access

Access is from the Tempe Railway Station car park. There are traffic lights for crossing Richardson Crescent.

If you are coming by car or bus, parking is available in this same car park.

Safety Issues

A ratio of one adult to eight children is strongly recommended.

Teachers and guides need to give clear instructions regarding safety to the children before commencing any walk. Emphasis should be on the importance of keeping to tracks and walking in a group with adults at the front and the end of the line. Students should stay back from the river unless in the company of an adult.

Teachers and guides should inform the children that they should not touch insects, spiders or other animals but inform their teacher. You may like to bring magnifying lenses and perspex boxes for viewing small creatures safely and take a camera to record any discoveries.

Teachers will need:

- a portable first aid kit
- a mobile phone in case of emergency (and written contact details for students)
- a map of the track with them.

Students should wear a hat, sunscreen, comfortable clothes and covered walking shoes with good gripping soles. They will need at least one bottle of water each and morning tea and lunch. They will also need to bring a clipboard, 4 x A4 sheets of paper, pens and coloured pencils or crayons for writing and drawing. A small backpack will allow students to keep hands free and all rubbish carried in must be carried out.

Begin with an acknowledgement of the traditional owners (wording provided).

Toilets at Tempe Station

Phone 9563 7417 to ensure that the toilets at Tempe Station are open.

Toilets at Steel Park, Marrickville

The toilets at Steel Park are open all year from 7:00 am to sunset. Steel Park is used by a number of schools for sport, on a regular basis. If you want to use an area for free play you will need to lodge a booking form with the Parks' Technical Officer. Contact Paul Kotsis on 9335 2283.

Facilities at Gough Whitlam Park, Earlwood

Gough Whitlam Park has toilets and an open area with six tables (2100mm x 670mm) with bench seating and four gas barbecues.

Contact: Warren Smails, Property Booking Manager, Canterbury Council, on 9789 9444, or via email: warrens@canterbury.nsw.gov.au, a week in advance if you want toilets open.

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These notes identify key points that can be discussed during the walk and suggested activities.

Students need:

- the 'Living Things' checklist
- the 'Natural or Built?' checklist
- the 'Making A Journey Map' activity sheet
- the 'Our Indigenous Mosaic' activity sheet.

How far is it?

Teachers might like to take a pedometer with them. A student can report the number of steps at different locations along the walk.

FROM TEMPE RAILWAY STATION CAR PARK, CROSS RICHARDSON CRESCENT AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS, TURN TO THE LEFT AND WALK TOWARDS THE PATHWAY THAT FOLLOWS THE RIVER.

STOP 1: TO THE WEST OF THE COOKS RIVER CANOE CLUB

Respect for Country

'We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and learn. We pay our respects to them for their care of the land over countless generations. We hope they will walk with us on our journey.' These were most likely the **Cadigal-Wangal** people. Today we will call them **Eora** 'people' and their country, '**Ngurra**.' (Try saying 'sing' to get the 'ng' sound).

Cooks River Canoe Club

Who has ever seen canoes on the river? And coloured ropes across the **river** with strips ('gates') hanging down? This is where they store the canoes.

View down the river

Who knows the name of the river? (Cooks River.) It's named after Captain Cook who first sailed into Botany Bay and up the river as far as near Marrickville Golf Course. That was in 1770, nearly 140 years ago. We don't know what the Aboriginal people called it though some believe it may have been a word that means 'pelican river'.

Pelicans still live on the river today.

Who's been to Botany Bay? Where is it from here? (Approximately 3.5 km to the east)

Where is east?

What direction does the sun come up in the morning? (East)

Where does it set (go down? (West)

Point to the east. Point to the west.

If it's near midday, face the sun and place one arm to the left and one arm to the right. You are facing north, south is behind you, west is to the left and east is to the right.

Back to the river

Where's this water coming from? (From the rain that has fallen on the land upstream and run into the river, over the land and also underground through the soil. Also from stormwater drains.)

Is it fresh or salty? (The river is fresh water but because it is **tidal**, salt water washes up the river two times every day. Where the fresh and saltwater are mixed we call it '**brackish'**).

Which way is it flowing? Have the teacher or a parent throw leaves or a stick in the water. Watch where it goes. (The main flow of the river is from the west towards the coast which is to the east.)

How long is the river? (Approximately 23km long, that's as far as from here to near Bankstown.)

How do you think the Aboriginal people used the river? (To fish, to swim, to travel, to wash.) They didn't change the river.

Europeans have used the river in many different ways and changed it over time.

What evidence can you see of change in the river? (Rocks along the opposite shoreline, trees planted and paths along the banks, rubbish in the river, artificial banks, marshes filled in.)

We call the features made by people '**built'** and if they are formed without people, '**natural'**. The rocks and planted trees and rubbish are built features. The river and birds are natural.

START THE 'NATURAL OR BUILT?' CHECKLIST

Would you drink this water? Would you eat fish from this river? (No to both because you could get sick.) People now look after the river and it is getting better all the time but there's still a lot of bad stuff (heavy metal poisons from factories) in the mud at the bottom and until this is cleared, the river is dangerous to swim in.

Living Things

POINT OUT SOME PLANTS AND WILDLIFE YOU'LL BE SEEING ALONG THE RIVER AND TICK THEM ON THE CHECKLIST:

Matt Rush (*Lomandra*) – we think that Aboriginal people crushed the seed heads to make damper and dried the leaves to make carrying baskets.

She-oaks (*Casuarinas*) – notice the 'carpet' of needles. Not much else grows underneath. A local Aboriginal girl tells us that as a child, her mother told her, 'if you get lost, go and sit under a Casuarina tree, the snakes don't like it there and you will be safe.' The needles are soft and your mother would be able to see you. These Casuarinas were planted in 1980. How old are they? (28+years)

Poplar (*Populus*). Introduced. Not native. Measure the **girth**. Compare with student's waist. How old? (Probably about thirty years.)

Paperbark (*Melaleuca*). Aboriginal people along the Murray-Darling wrapped newborn babies in the soft bark and made cloaks to keep warm when it was cold. Sometimes **shields** were cut from the bark.

STOP 2: MACKEY PARK, MARRICKVILLE

Imagine you're one of the early British settlers. You want food. What would you grow here? (Wheat, potatoes, beans, cabbages etc.) And fruits? (Apples, oranges, plums, pears, peaches, apricots etc)

That's what they did on the rich soils next to the river. They also kept dairy cattle. What do you get from a dairy cow? (Milk)

Chinese market gardens

SHOW PHOTO OF MARKET GARDENS.

There may also have been Chinese market gardens here too.

High tide mark

Point out the tide stainings on the rocks across the river (south side).

STOP 3: **GROSS POLLUTANT TRAP (GPT)**

Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT)

How far have we walked? (Answer from pedometers.)

What is this? How does it work? (It traps bottles, bags and other rubbish travelling down the stormwater drain. This rubbish is then collected by a garbage truck and taken away to a landfill site.)

Where has this rubbish come from? (From all the streets, gutters and shops between here and Marrickville Metro and Newtown.)

How can we make the river healthy? (In lots of ways. Cleaning up the rubbish, not dropping papers on the street, planting along the banks, collecting oil from cooking and disposing of it in garbage bins rather than pouring it down the drain…)

Pumping station and air vents

These are the pumping station and air vents for the sewer. Without the air vents, the sewer would explode from the gases.

Mangroves up close

TICK MANGROVE (*AVICENNIA*) ON THE CHECKLIST.

STOP 4: BEHIND HOUSES BUILT ON HIGH GROUND WITH BACKYARDS RUNNING DOWN TO TRACK

Sometimes the river flooded

After heavy rain, the river sometimes flooded and came right up to the backs of where the houses are. In 1889, (nearly 130 years ago), the flood was so high across the valley that only fence tops, tufts of trees and the roofs of huts and houses were visible.

What would you do if you found your land flooded? (Move if you could!) Notice how many of the today's homes are built on high ground.

Solar light panels

Here's another good thing happening along the river: the lights are powered by the sun. This saves energy and means less coal is burned to make electricity. Who has solar panels at home?

STOP 5: **ROCK OUTCROPS AND OVERHANGS**

Rock outcrops and overhangs

These are **sandstone**. Run your hand over the rock. What does it feel like? Is it rough or smooth? Does it feel gritty like sand?

STOP 6: BUSHY GLADE WOW!

BRAINSTORM THE ADJECTIVES / NOUNS / NOUN GROUPS TO DESCRIBE WHAT YOU CAN SEE, HEAR, SMELL. RECORD THIS BANK OF WORDS TO USE BACK AT SCHOOL.

Point out Port Jackson Fig. Grey-headed flying foxes like the fruit on the figs.

Point out the Landcare sign. Volunteers are getting rid of the weeds and planting natives.

STOP 7: ROCK OVERHANG WOW!

MOVE UP TO THE ROCK OVERHANG. STUDENTS COULD SKETCH THE VIEW TO THE SOUTH. PROVIDE COLOUR SWATCHES SO THEY CAN MATCH THE COLOURS THEN PAINT THEIR DRAWINGS BACK AT SCHOOL.

SHOW PHOTO OF 'THE WARREN'. This was Thomas Holt's house built on the hill above us.

ASK STUDENTS TO FIND OUT ABOUT THOMAS HOLT WHEN BACK AT SCHOOL. ALSO FIND OUT WHAT A MAUSOLEUM IS. (Thomas Holt built a mausoleum here for his family but it was not used.)

Rock face with graffiti

Is the rock a natural or built feature? (Natural)

What evidence is there that stone was once cut from this rock? (Vertical drill marks cut into the rock were the first stage of separating blocks of stone from the main mass. The blocks were then cut into smaller blocks and 'dressed'.)

STOP 8: ONCE A **WATERFALL**?

Could this section of rock have been a waterfall at one time? What evidence supports this view? (The large stormwater pipe that now carries water underground to the river, the top of the rock now 3-4 m above the path.)

Sandstone foundations on house

Look for houses with stone foundations.

Where do you think the sandstone came from? (Most likely from the 'quarry' they've just passed.)

STOP 9: THE **BEACH**

What evidence do we have that this beach is made by people? (The walls and the sand which is light brown. All **sediment** near the river is black mud.)

The plant growing here is saltmarsh. This tells us that the water is **brackish**, a mixture of fresh and salt water.

STOP 10: **ROCK POOL** AT BASE OF **CLIFF** TO THE NORTH

What could this circle of rocks be? Swimming pool? (Bit small.) **Pond**? (Maybe.) Is it natural or built? How can you tell? (It's a regular circle and sandstone does not normally occur naturally in patterns like this.)

STOP 11: SWOOS

SWOOS

What do you think this is? (Southern and Western Ocean Outfall Sewer)

It's the main pipe that carries **sewage** (what you do in the toilet) to the treatment plant at? (Malabar.) When it was first built, the sewage went to a sewage farm at Kyeemagh on Botany Bay.

It was 100 years old in 1999. When were you born?

Once this pipe was built, the sewage didn't have to go in the creek any more. (For many years, '**nightsoil'** was collected and dumped on paddocks. After rain it washed into the river.)

Pop top lids

These are inspection points for the sewer pipes that run underground taking soil from toilets to the treatment plant at Malabar. There's one under the SWOOS.

How do they get their name? After heavy rain, the lids pop off.

Weeds

There are plenty of **exotic** (introduced, not native) plants.

POINT OUT LANTANA, PRIVET AND ASPARAGUS FERN. THERE'S EVEN PRICKLY PEAR ON A ROCK LEDGE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE PATH.

Where do the **weeds** come from? (Weeds are just plants in the wrong places so when exotics escape from gardens, they become weeds in the bushland.) The Prickly Pear seems to have escaped from a backyard garden. Weeds are also spread by birds and animals, wind and water.

Stormwater

What do you think this is? (Yes it's a pipe that carries water from the streets and homes, down to the river.)

Is it a natural or a built feature? ('Built' because people have made it.)

What else is it bringing into the river? (Litter and leaves and oil from streets and factories.)

STOP 12: NEAR THE **MANGROVES**

STUDENTS COULD COMPLETE THE 'AMAZING MANGROVES' ACTIVITY SHEET ANYWHERE ALONG THIS SECTION

What do we call these plants? (Mangroves)

What can you see living here? (Generally spiders or spiders' webs and possibly birds.)

What evidence is there that crabs might live here? (Holes in the mud, small balls of mud.)

Explain the special features of mangroves and why we've called them 'amazing'.

What doesn't belong here? (Plastic bottles, polystyrene etc)

Where did they come from? (Ashfield, Summer Hill, Marrickville and Dulwich Hill shops and homes, from the gutters and drains in the streets.)

What can we do to help improve our river?

Heritage

Can anyone see an old home that might have been here more than a hundred years ago?

Point out the old house on the cliff to the west.

What are three differences between the old and new houses? (Style, size, materials.)

STOP 13: STEEL PARK

Knowing what we already know, how do you think this area next to the river would have been used by the early British settlers? (For farming.)

Why? (Rich soils, flat land, water.)

SHOW PHOTO OF SWAMP. What had happened to change the land from a swamp into a park? (filled in). Another name for a swamp is **'wetland'**.

STEEL PARK HAS TOILETS.

More trees

What's the other name for **Paperbarks**? (*Melaleucas*)

And what were they used for? ('Blankets' for newborn babies and cloaks for when it was cold. Sometimes an oval of bark was cut to make a shield.)

Point out the Poplars.

Point out the **lichen** on the south side of the trees, particularly the Casuarinas.

STOP 14: CLEAR VIEW OF THE RIVER

Is it low or high tide? How can you tell? (At low tide mud is visible. At high tide, the water is just below the top of the **river bank.**

TICK THE BIRDS YOU CAN SEE ON THE CHECKLIST.

Clear view of **cliffs** on the south side, above Undercliffe Road. More sandstone quarries.

Illawarra Road Bridge

STUDENTS WILL NEED TO WALK IN PAIRS WHILE CROSSING THE BRIDGE

How far have we walked? (Pedometer reading.)

As you walk across the bridge, look downstream to the Bunya Pine in the distance. Single, dominant trees like this were often used to guide travellers across country. People wanting to visit 'The Warren' on the top of Marrickville hill could see the property's location from kilometres away.

If there were no bridge, how would you get to the other side? When would it be easier to swim across, low or high tide? Would you swim in the river? (No, it's too polluted and you could get very sick.)

There were no cars when this bridge was built so who used it? (Horse-drawn wagons and people riding horses or walking.)

100 years ago there was a boatshed here and a hotel, shop and swimming hole. And later on, even a river life-saving club. SHOW PHOTOS.

STOP 15: NEAR **CASUARINAS**

What are these trees? (She-oaks or Casuarinas.)

Notice how they grow along the river banks. These have been planted and help keep the soil in place, that is, stop erosion. Notice how there's more lichen on the south sides of the trunks and branches.)

CONTINUE ALONG PATH.

Saltmarsh

This is a good indicator that the water is salty.

Would you drink this water? (No! It's smelly and the river looks dirty.)

More stormwater

Point out the **stormwater pipes** entering the river.

What pollution can you see? (**Litter**, perhaps oil slick.)

How do we know if the river is healthy? (By what it looks and smells like and by testing water samples such as in Streamwatch.)

STOP 16: BIG TREE

How big is that?

Pick a big tree and measure its **girth**. Compare with a volunteer's waist.

Houses high and away from river

POINT OUT THAT THE HOUSES ARE HIGH AND BUILT AWAY FROM THE RIVER.

Imagine the river two metres higher than the bank (as in 1889). Now you know why the houses are where they are.

STOP 17: REMAINS OF RAMP ON WATER SIDE

Point out the old ramp. Made of concrete and sandstone and about five houses back from the end of this section of path. What do you think this is? (Probably a boat ramp.)

Wanstead Park

Named after 'Wanstead', the home built in 1837 by Frederick Unwin in a spot described as having 'extreme beauty'. It also had a **permanent** fresh water supply because there was a dam across the river at Tempe. It was largely because of this dam and the silt that built up behind it, that the flood level in 1889 was so high.

STOP 18: THE SWOOS

THE CARPET OF NEEDLES UNDER THE CASUARINAS NEXT TO THE SWOOS WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE FOR A STOP.

COULD MAKE LEAF AND BARK RUBBINGS AND HAVE FREE PLAY IN WANSTEAD PARK.

Bunya Pine on Marrickville hill

There's that landmark again.

Gough Whitlam Park

Who was Gough Whitlam? A Prime Minister? (Yes) Gough Whitlam was a leader of Australia in the 1970s. He was doing the job that Mr Rudd (or…) does today.

Tell me three built features. (Picnic tables, paths, bridges, playground, signs etc)

Name three natural features. (The river, ibis, pigeons, dogs, trees. NB: Strictly speaking, planted trees are 'built' but this is a distinction best left for when students are older.)

STOP 19: THE WORLD GARDEN

This is new. It's a garden that celebrates all the people in Canterbury from all different countries.

Are these introduced or native plants? (A mix.)

How much do you like this garden: a little, a lot, not much?

STOP 20: THE RESPECT – UNITY – PEACE MOSAIC

What's the mosaic showing? (The river, a kangaroo, a goanna, oyster, scallop and snail shells, journey lines, two Aboriginal men with spears and two spirits of the river. The hands and footprints across the top represent the artwork in local caves.)

What is the name of the Aboriginal clan that we think lived here? (Bidjigal)

After the Bidjigal were moved off the land, this was a dairy farm. The river was also a popular picnic spot with waterholes for swimming.

STOP 21: A NEW WETLAND

What do you usually see in wetlands? (Lots of reeds and rushes. Birds, turtles, frogs, eels, snakes and little fish are usually there too but hiding. Dragonflies, bees and other invertebrates.)

This one has an **island**. Why would birds feel safer there? (Because dogs and cats can't reach them.)

Are we there yet?

Pedometer reading.

COMPLETE THE 'MAKING A JOURNEY MAP' ACTIVITY SHEET.

This can be done as an individual or group activity. Since Gough Whitlam Park has tables, group work would be possible. There are six tables (2100mm x 670mm), with bench seats.

Rolls of butcher's paper will need to be cut to size in advance. It is also a good idea to reinforce the edges with tape. These are the base for the journey maps.

BUS PICK UP FROM GOUGH WHITLAM PARK CAR PARK, BAYVIEW AVENUE, UNDERCLIFFE (EARLWOOD)