

Macleay Walking Trails

33 walks explored by the Macleay Meanderers



Christa Schwoebel and John Cruickshanks

Welcome to Country

THE MACLEAY VALLEY is the home of the Dhanggati (also spelled Dunghutti) nation. We acknowledge as we walk the Dhanggati Elders, past, present and emerging, as the traditional owners as we walk.

Banduungakayui, Mulumungu — from the mountains to the sea.

Dhanggati Elder Aunty Cheryl Blair kindly gave us this Welcome to Country:

Yawayi

Hello

Barrung marrung

Good Morning

Bimayi marrung

Good Afternoon

Miyanggan dhanang?

How are you?

***Nyinanhambu bitha, nyinanhambu warru wa bukul,
banduunggakayi mulumun.gu***

Our river, our plains and hills from the mountains to the sea

Dhanggati guthun barri dhitiyn.

This is Dhanggati country.

Dhangu barri dhityin.

This is my country.

Dhanang, marrunga barrya dhityindha!

May you all be well in this country!

Nyiyang wanha-n nyinanhambu biyandu

yama-mang waa yapang barri-ya.

We leave behind our hand and footprints on 'Country'.

Macleay Walking Trails

by

Christa Schwoebel

and

John Cruickshanks

Published in 2020 by

Kempsey Macleay Valley University of the Third Age Inc.— KMVU3A Inc.

PO Box 3666

West Kempsey 2440

www.kempseymacleayu3a.com.au

Copyright © Christa Schwoebel and John Cruickshanks

Electronic version updated March 2023

No portion of this book may be reproduced by any means without prior written permission from the publisher and the authors.

Walking Trails – Mid North Coast – Macleay Valley –

Kempsey – KMVU3A – Walking Guide

ISBN 978-0-646-81686-9

Cover design and red cedar photo by John Cruickshanks

Cover photo of walking group at Crescent Head by Gerald Officer

All proceeds from the sale of this book go to KMVU3A Inc.

Printed and bound in Australia by LEP



CONTENTS

Welcome to Country	Inside front cover
Preface and Acknowledgements	v
Macleay Valley Coast — Discover Something New	vi
Introduction	vii
Town Walks	1
West Kempsey	3
South to East	5
East Kempsey	9
Gladstone-Smithtown	11
Bellbrook	13
Short Stroll	13
Stuarts Point	15
North Macleay Arm	17
Sandy Tracks	19
A stroll to the beach	19
Stuarts Point to Grassy Head	21
South West Rocks	23
Boyters Lane – Bird Hide	25
Back Creek to Macleay River Breakwall	27
Horseshoe Bay to Mangrove Forest	29
To Arakoon and Trial Bay Gaol	31
Smoky Cape	33
Three Walks at Monument Hill	35
From the Gaol to Smoky Cape Lighthouse	39
Gap Beach Circuit	43
Jack Perkins Track and Lighthouse	45
Hat Head	47
Circumnavigating Korogoro Point — “The Hat”	49
Hat Head – The Easy Way	51
Hat Head — Connors Hill Trail	52
Going South	55
Crescent Head	57
Over The Top	59
From the Swimming Pool to Back Beach	61
Big Hill Rainforest Walking Track	63
Big Hill South Trail	65
Forest Walks	67
Tamban Forest	71
Yarravel Nature Reserve, Skillion Flat .	73
Dondingalong Forest Walk	75
West End Circuit	79
Mount Thompson	81
Maria National Park	84
Some suggested reading and websites to visit	87

MAP INDEX

<i>Map</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Map</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 West Kempsey	2	15 Gap Beach Circuit	42
2 South to East	4	16 Jack Perkins Track & Lighthouse	44
3 East Kempsey	8	21 Crescent Head — Over The Top	58
4 Gladstone/Smithtown	10	22 Crescent Head to Back Beach	60
5 Bellbrook	12	23 Big Hill Rainforest	62
6 Stuarts Point Macleay North Arm	16	24 Big Hill South Trail	64
7 Stuarts Point Sandy Tracks	18	25 Tamban Forest — Getting There	68
8 Stuarts Point/Grassy Head	20	26 Tamban Forest	70
9 Boyters Lane Bird Hide	24	27 Yarravel Nature Reserve Skillion Flat	72
10 Macleay River Mouth to Back Creek	26	28 Dondingalong — Getting There	74
11 Horseshoe Bay to Mangrove Forest ...	28	29 Dondingalong	76
12a South West Rocks to Arakoon	30	30 West End Circuit	78
12b South West Rocks to Arakoon	31	31 Mount Thompson	80
13 Monument Hill — Three Options	34	32 Thompsons Tower Road — Getting There	82
14a Overshot Dam to Lighthouse	36	33 Maria River National Park	83
14b Overshot Dam to Lighthouse	37	34 Area Map	85

Preface and Acknowledgements

What is U3A and why this book?

U3A stands for the University of the Third Age. The First Age covers from birth to the end of our secondary schooling, when we learn all our basic skills and, hopefully, our preparation for adult life.

The Second Age is where we use what we have learnt in the First Age, continue our learning, make our way in life in employment, raising families and expanding our horizons. It is a busy time of life where there is little time to stop and smell the roses. We have to be responsible adults.

The Third Age is when we retire from our labours, usually because we are in our old age. Rust sets in, as our bodies are not what they used to be. We have to learn how to enjoy our remaining years. It is the last lap and time to take stock. We are still learning even though we have a lifetime of experience behind us — hence the University of the Third

Age is an opportunity for seniors to share their expertise, enjoy the company of other seniors and enjoy the last lap of their lives.

Why this book: Those of us who have lived on the Macleay for a long time can remember when Kempsey was called the Cedar Town after one of the most beautiful timbers in the world. The cover background of this book is a photograph of that timber. The Macleay Valley has more than beautiful timber as the whole area has many claims to fame, not the least of which is the general beauty of our valley, including its waterways and hinterland.

We have been enjoying where we live for a long time and it was felt this book could be a way to share our valley with the wider community.

We hope you use it and enjoy the experiences it offers.

Acknowledgements

This book would not exist if it were not for the initiators, participants and class leaders of Kempsey Macleay Valley U3A walking group, the Macleay Meanderers.

Our thanks go to every walker who ever came along. The group usually has about 25 enrolments each term. Over the years, people moved away or had to drop out for health reasons; new members joined. Class leadership rotated, but one was constant and deserves special mention: Margaret Jopling, OAM. Margaret only missed a walk when she was busy giving swimming lessons to school children or collecting medals when swimming in the Pan Pacific Masters Games.

The maps were created by John Cruickshanks with Google maps as templates using his considerable skills developed over many years of map making.

Christa Schwoebel wrote the text, supplied photos (marked CS) and coordinated the

development of the book.

Gerald Officer supplied his excellent photos (marked GO). His photos of the walkers explain why he often left the track.

Special thanks go to Dhangatti Elder, Auntie Cheryl Blair, for the generous Welcome to Country.

We thank Gabi Brie for her encouragement, liaison with KMVU3A committee and proofreading, also Dr Nona Harvey, who assisted generously in the editing process with her attention to detail.

All contributions to this book have been provided on a voluntary basis, which means all benefits from the enterprise will go to Kempsey Macleay Valley U3A Inc.

Thanks go to KMVU3A committee for financing and taking on the role of publisher.

Kempsey Shire Council has provided financial assistance for the hard copy in return for rights to the digital use of this book.



Macleay Walking Trails creates a personalised and well tested introduction to the many walks within the Macleay Valley.

Kempsey Shire Council Economic Development and Tourism team is proud to support this publication as it captures the ability for all ages and groups of people to explore the many walks of the Macleay Valley. The work of the KMVU3A group is outstanding in its detail and scope and it is a testament to the importance of projects like the Five Headlands Trail encouraging locals and visitors to explore the Macleay Valley.

One of Kempsey Shire Council's key future projects is to establish and promote a 100 kilometre trek, the Five Headlands Trail, which has been recognised as a priority project for development within the Macleay Valley Coast Destination Management Plan 2019-2029. The Five Headland Trail will become a multi-day walk from the northern most Grassy Head to the southern Point Plomer along the coast that make up the Kempsey local government area.

Creating a unique coastal walking experience, the Five Headland Trail will link five coastal headlands and the five coastal communities of Grassy Head, Stuarts Point, South West Rocks, Hat Head and Crescent Head. It passes through several National Parks.

Many sections of the Five Headland Trail have been walked and tested by the KMVU3A group and are included in this book.

Linking the five communities by a Five Headland Trail enables visitors to enjoy an array of accommodation options, plus historic, natural and unique tourist attractions associated with each of the headlands and coastal communities.

While it is anticipated that only a small number of visitors or locals would attempt to hike the trail in its entirety, the overarching objectives are to maximise the benefits of a unique coastal trail network across pristine natural headlands that link directly to other historic and unique tourist attractions.

Introduction

FOR several years, members of Kempsey Macleay Valley University of the Third Age (KMVU3A) have been going on weekly walks in the Macleay Valley. These walks are known as the Macleay Meanders.

For the group, meandering doesn't mean aimless wandering around on any given day, but going to various predetermined locations. Therefore the walks have provided not only healthy exercise, but also opportunities to explore the Macleay.

The walks undertaken have mostly been easy, some on well-trodden and signposted paths, but many routes are not so well known. Even on walks around the town of Kempsey the exclamation "I never knew this was here" can be heard from people who have lived here for a long time.

Newcomers and visitors to the area often found it difficult to find good information about walking routes, therefore we decided to share our experience in this book.

With 2,000 hard copies sold, the book is now only available as interactive pdf on the Kempsey Shire Council web site where numerous other walks and activities are also promoted.

Most walks described in this booklet are in the Lower Macleay with circuits of six to ten kilometres in length with only minor hills to conquer. Upriver walks we have explored are mainly on roads and are not included. They can easily be found and followed on any map. Only a walk around the village of Bellbrook is included here.

For Bellbrook, Gladstone and parts of Kempsey Walks in History brochures are valuable companions. They can be downloaded at <http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/publications.html>, picked up at the Kempsey Museum in the South Kempsey Park, 62 Lachlan Street, or the Visitor Information Centre at the same address.

We give the distances for each walk, but no estimates of time. Generally it is assumed that it takes one hour to walk four kilometres. If you are a brisk walker you can reduce this time. If you tend to frequently smell the flowers, admire the view or take photos, you might add time.

The natural environment is always changing. A walk we experienced in fine weather might have difficult or even impassable sections after heavy rain. Tracks might become overgrown and in State forests clearfelling of large sections can reduce the environment to unattractive wasteland.

Many walks can be extended by simply going a bit further or by connecting to another walk in the area. Big Hill is one such example, where two walks can be done by fit walkers in one day. And don't forget, every walk can be shortened – you can always turn back.

Please be realistic about your physical abilities. Most of the walks described in this book are easy, but the weather – especially on hot days – can make walking more difficult.

Always make sure you have appropriate clothing and products for sun protection and for some areas near waterways you may also like to use insect repellents.

We consider hats to be essential and so, of course, is water. It's best to also carry a snack. We trust you are able to choose the right footwear, whether sandals or hiking boots.

If you walk on your own, let somebody know where you are going.

It's best not to leave valuables in your car.

On many of our walks we have been accompanied by dogs, but dogs are banned in National Parks and at some beaches. Please observe the regulations.

LEAVE NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS, TAKE NOTHING BUT PHOTOGRAPHS

Unfortunately, not everybody treasures a pristine environment. Walking tracks in the bush are often used as rubbish dumps. That can be in state forests, in national parks or on public land looked after by Kempsey Shire Council.

The Kempsey Shire covers a vast area and council rangers cannot keep all under control at all times. However, they are grateful for any information and will follow it up on public land. Where appropriate, they will identify and contact private landowners. If you find dumped rubbish please call 6566-3200.

If you find rubbish dumped in national parks, please contact the Kempsey office at 247 Old Station Road, tel. 6561-6700, or npws.hastingsmacleay@environment.nsw.gov.au

For rubbish in state forests you can contact the Mid North Coast Regional Office, 4 Maher St Wauchope, tel. 6585-3744 or contact them via their website: <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/contact-us>.

Town Walks

SOME people prefer walking in the bush, others feel more comfortable staying in the townships. We include detailed descriptions for three walks in Kempsey which have been tested by the Macleay Meanderers.

Another attractive walk in a built-up area covers Gladstone and Smithtown. Last but not least, we recommend walks in Bellbrook which is not strictly a town and the exploration of this village can include walks into the surrounding countryside.

Around Kempsey

Here are three walks, tested by the Macleay Meanderers.

1. West Kempsey
2. South and East Kempsey
3. East Kempsey

The group always met and began their walks in the car park at Sydney Street. One can also start and finish the Kempsey town walks at Riverside Park, where there is ample parking.

Where possible, “off-road” sections are included, such as walking through parks, across the sports fields or, when going to South Kempsey, walking on the footpath across the railway bridge.

For people interested in the history of the town, a visit to the Kempsey Museum in the South Kempsey Park, 62 Lachlan Street, is highly recommended. Descriptions of History Walks, compiled by the Macleay River Historical Society are available at the museum or the Visitor Information Centre next door.

The brochures can also be downloaded from <http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/publications.html>



View from Rudder Park, Kempsey. (CS)



West Kempsey

Approx. 6km — Easy

THE highlight of this walk is a visit to the 2.75 hectare Wigay Aboriginal Cultural Park. Established in the 1980s by the Macleay Valley Afforestation Association, it was part of Kempsey TAFE for many years and is now managed by Kempsey Shire Council.

There are numerous food trees, some of them labelled. Picnic tables invite rest. Group tours can be arranged. For more information go to https://macleayvalleycoast.com.au/great_things_to_do/wigay-aboriginal-cultural-park/

There is also a History Walk, concentrating on the area from the corner of Sea Street along Elbow Street. It could be combined with the more extensive walk described here. For the brochure go to <https://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/pubs/walks-in-history-west-kempsey.pdf>

THE WALK...

From the carpark at Sydney Street go to Belgrave Street. Cross Belgrave Street at the traffic lights and turn left. After about 500m cross the railway line, turn right at the roundabout and right again into Kemp Street. The Anglican and Catholic churches are on the left, Kempsey Railway Station is on the right.

Walk on the footpath on the left side past St Joseph's Primary School. After about 1km turn left into Cochrane Street, then take the third on the left. This is Broughton Street, a wide avenue with trees in the centre. Cross Sea Street, walk past Kempsey High School to the corner of Tozer Street. Turn left and walk about 300m downhill where you find Wigay Park on your left.

Walk through the park, but take your time exploring it, and leave at Sea Street. Turn right. As you walk along Sea Street, you will see the iconic Kempsey Showground buildings on your left. At the roundabout where Sea Street joins Kemp Street, the West Kempsey shops and cafés are on the right.



Wigay Cultural Park. (CS)

To return to the starting point, keep going in a southerly direction. After 300m turn left into Eden Street, go under the railway and walk across the playing fields back to Sydney Street carpark.



South to East

Distance 7km – Easy, with a couple of minor hills

THIS walk takes you on the footpath across the railway bridge to South Kempsey, then to East Kempsey, through the cemetery and the twists and turns of the residential area.

At the cemetery are the graves of early white settlers, for example Enoch Rudder who is considered to be the founder of the town of Kempsey.

There is also a memorial for those Dunghutti people who were buried in unmarked graves. Their names and the names of their descendants are recorded on a large headstone.

For those who are interested in finding information about specific graves can access <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2288864/kempsey-east-cemetery>.

Our starting point is the Sydney Street/Verge Lane carpark. Of course, any other point along the route can be chosen.



Walking across the river – even on a rainy day. (CS)

THE WALK...

From the carpark, cross Sydney Street and walk diagonally across playing fields towards the railway line.

At Eden Street turn right. There is no proper footpath, so be careful.

Walk under the railway line, then turn left towards the river.

Near the riverbank, steps lead up to the pedestrian path on the railway bridge.

On the south side of the bridge you reach Railway

Street. After 200m turn left, go over the bridge crossing the railway and walk about 300m along Bloomfield Street.

On the left is a small park, opposite the corner of Macquarie Street, go about 100m through the park, then turn right into Druitt Street. At the end you reach Lachlan Street, the old highway.

Turn left, cross with care and, on the other side, turn right into Gordon Rees Street which leads into the East Kempsey Cemetery.

You can take your time exploring the graves and the memorial while walking down the hill towards East Street.

Turn left at East Street, walk up the hill towards Lord Street.

Turn right into the side road parallel to the main road. After 200m turn right into

Colin Dickson Street, walk down the hill and turn left into Craig St. Here, at the edge of town, a rural atmosphere prevails with residences on the left side and paddocks on the right.



Aboriginal memorial for those resting in unmarked graves. (CS)

Turn left into Gill Street. From here there are several options to wander through the streets of East Kempsey.

As an alternative route you can continue up Gill Street to the main road, turn left, cross over with care and go into Rudder Park where there are magnificent views across the river and the town towards the Great Dividing Range.

Continuing from Gill Street, we suggest crossing over with care then turn into Innes Street.

Turn left into Herborne Avenue and walk down to “Chaddies” on Rudder Street.

Chaddies Store was originally operated by Thomas Keneally’s grandfather. The verandah at the front of the store invites you to have some refreshments and a rest.

From Chaddies, cross Rudder Street and take the footpath over the Kempsey Traffic Bridge.

At end of bridge turn right, go down to the footpath on the river bank, turn right again and go under the bridge.

Walk through Riverside Park to the end of the path and turn right into John St.

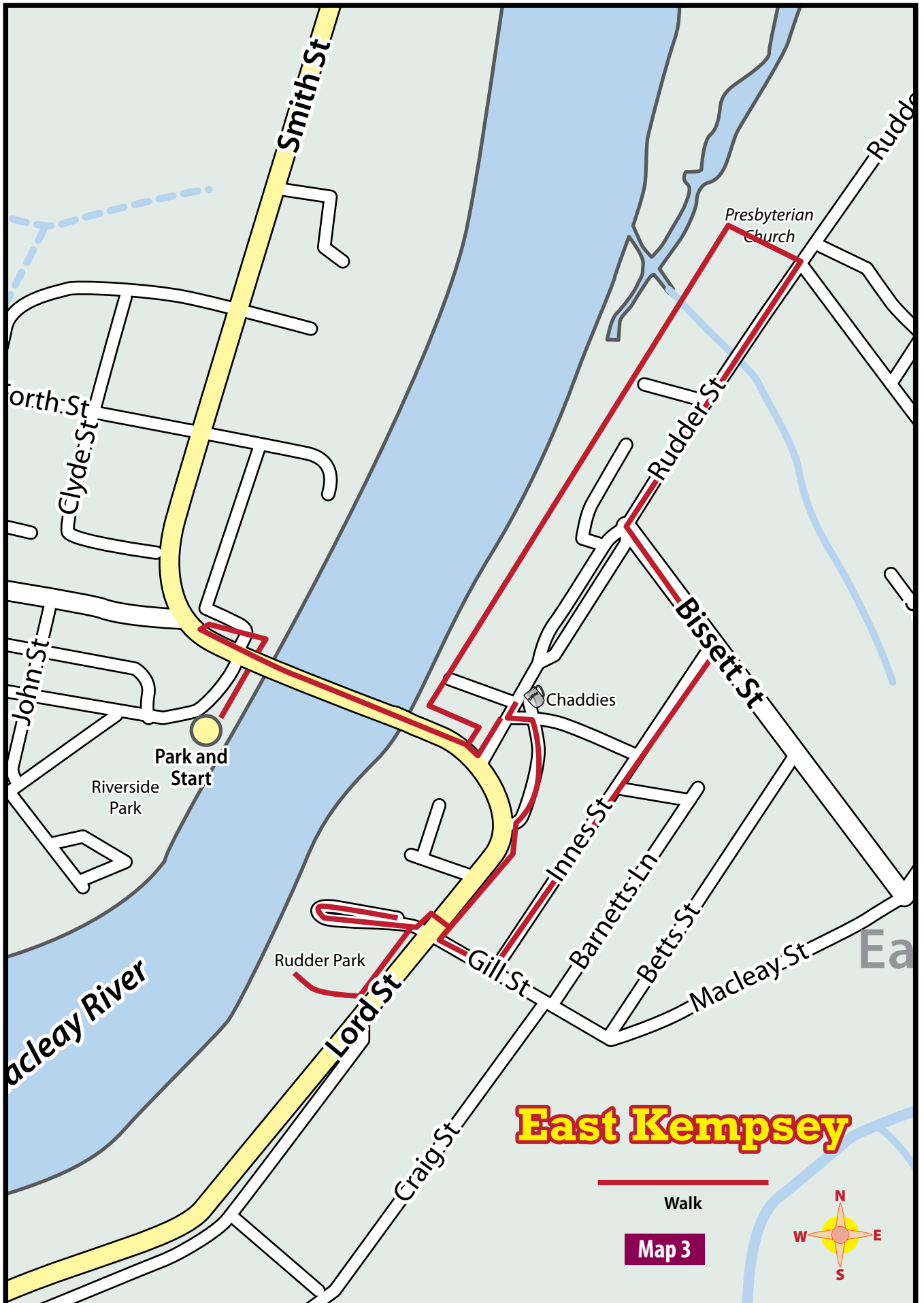
Cross over Eden Street into Austral Street to the end and you are in Sydney Street.

Turn right to the carpark, where the walk began.



Kempsey traffic bridge (GO).

According to a Stanford University study, "walking opens up the free flow of ideas, and it is a simple and robust solution to the goals of increasing creativity and increasing physical activity."



East Kempsey

From Riverside Park 5km — Easy

THIS walk includes a lovely section along the riverbank and a Landcare tree planting project. It provides an opportunity to go to Rudder Park Lookout and have refreshments at Chaddies.

For parts of this walk you might like to use a “Walks in History” guide from the Historical Society:

<https://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/library/heritage/pubs/walks-in-history-east-kempsey.pdf>

THE WALK...

From Riverside Park walk towards the Kempsey Traffic Bridge. Go under the bridge to reach the footpath leading onto the bridge and cross over to the other bank. Go down the steps on the left at the end of the bridge. Turn right and follow the path along the riverbank.

After about 500m you see the shed used by the local Landcare Group and towards the right is an area of afforestation. You can either stay close to the river or follow the path through the more recently planted trees.

After another 200m you reach the Presbyterian Church grounds. Turn right, walk through the grounds to Rudder Street.

Turn right, walk about 300m, turn left into Bissett Street, right into Innes Street and right into Gill Street to Lord Street (the old highway).

Cross the road at the pedestrian refuge island. Turn left. If you wish, you can turn right into Gabriel Avenue a short dead end road where there are some early buildings, such as ‘Shaweetah’ at the end of the Avenue. This house was built in 1910 for Mr O. O. Dangar, an Alderman of the first Borough Council. For more details about the historical houses in this street see the above mentioned “Walks in History” brochure.

Return to the highway, turn right and right again to the Rudder Park Lookout. There is a good view to Riverside Park, the CBD and the mountains beyond.

On the return walk, to reach the walkway on the right side of the bridge, you can cross the highway at the pedestrian island or go to the underpass at the beginning of the bridge.

Cross over the bridge, turn right and right again

Before returning over the bridge, you might like to sit down for refreshments at Chaddies (see South to East Walk).



Looking west from Rudder Park. (CS)



Gladstone-Smithtown

6km — Easy

LINKED by a traffic bridge, Gladstone and Smithtown are located on opposite banks of the Macleay River.

Gladstone invites one to explore several cafés, the Heritage Hotel, interesting shops and the Kempsey Shire Community Art Gallery. The very popular Gladstone Quality Markets are on the 3rd Sunday of every month from 9am to 2pm.

Smithtown is home to the long-established Nestlé factory, famous for the original production of Milo. The Smithtown Riverview Hotel is located on the banks of the Macleay.

This return walk takes in the very different characteristics of both villages. It is mostly flat with a gentle rise at the bridge.

THE WALK...

Start at Gladstone Park opposite the Heritage Hotel. Plenty of parking is available.

Walk north along Kinchela Street towards the bridge.

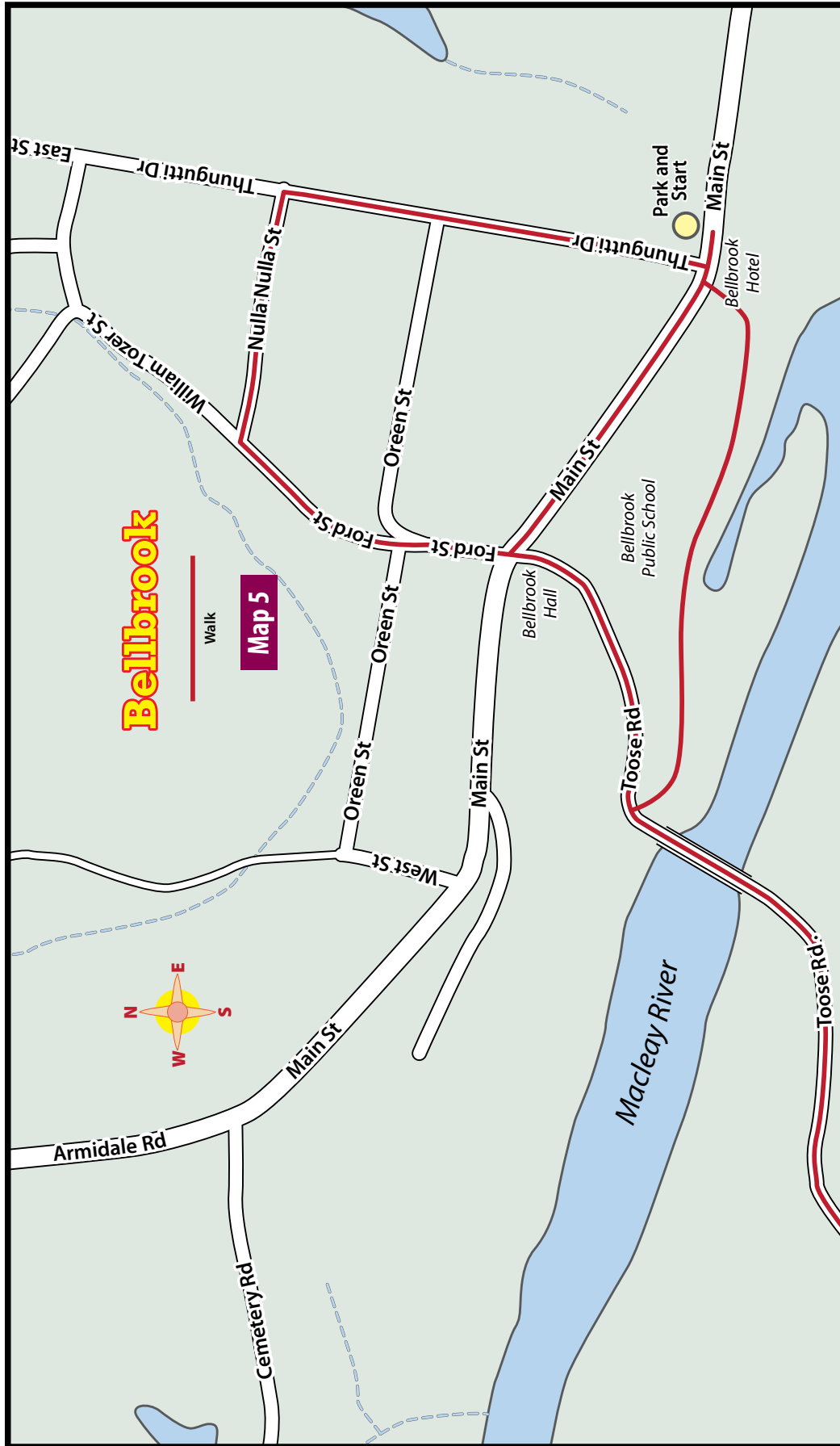
Cross the river. At the end of the bridge is a footpath on the left leading down to Croads Esplanade. Turn right into Main Street and then left into any of the streets leading South and ending at the Park on the bend of the Macleay River. The park adjoins the Nestlé factory.



Meanderers chatting at Smithtown Park. (CS)

Picnic tables are a good invitation to take a rest.

You can choose a different street in Smithtown for the return walk.



Bellbrook

BELLBROOK is a village in the Upper Macleay registered on the National Trust and the National Estate.

A copy of the Walks in History helps to explore the historical buildings from the time of colonial settlement. It can be obtained at the Museum or Information Centre or at <https://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/library/heritage/pubs/walks-in-history-bellbrook.pdf>.

The 45 min (53km) drive from Kempsey to Bellbrook is part of the experience. At approx 45km there is a lookout with a wonderful view of the valley towards Bellbrook.



View from lookout (CS)

The best place to start and end any walk in Bellbrook is at the pub. Besides the usual offer of drinks and meals, you can take the opportunity for a chat with locals and admire the view from the verandah.

The following three walks can be combined into one.

Short Stroll

1.2 km circuit — Easy

For the short stroll as recommended by the Historical Society, walk 250m along Main Street towards Armidale. At the General Store corner turn right into Ford Street. After 250m turn right into Nulla Nulla Street and right again at Thungutti Drive which takes you back to the pub at Main Street.



Main Street with sheep (CS)

This walk can be extended by starting with a visit to the Macleay River Bridge. From the bridge you can also choose to venture further out into the farmland.

Along the track to the bridge

At the back of the pub, there is a narrow track leading down the riverbank and along the edge of the riverbed to the bridge. Keep to the right under the trees until you come to Toose Road. Turn left to the bridge for a view of the river.

To go back to the village, turn around and follow Toose Street up the hill to the Main Street.



Bellbrook bridge, leading to further walks on the other side of the river. (GO)

And further out into the countryside...

Cross the bridge and you come to a fork in the road. Right is the continuation of Toose Road, left is Rossiter Road.

You can take either road and walk as far as you wish. Be mindful of any traffic and of the distance you go. You will have to return the same way.

Stuarts Point

Distance from Kempsey 41 km, 40 min. Car parking near Holiday Park Entrance



“A quaint timber footbridge allows you to cross the river and walk through the sand dunes to access the beach. If you fancy exploring a little further afield you can take easy walks all the way to Grassy Head to see the former mouth of the Macleay River.” (GO)

ON the Macleay Valley Coast website Stuarts Point is described as a “quiet, riverside village situated on the arm of the Macleay River as it empties into the Pacific Ocean.

“There is a boat ramp and mooring available, and an almost unlimited choice of beach and river fishing spots.”

https://macleayvalleycoast.com.au/location_listing/stuarts-point/.

Yarrahapinni Mountain with Yarriabini National Park is nearby. Except for the Pines picnic area with a short walking track, walking in this National Park is not easy. For further information go to the National Parks website.

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/yarriabini-national-park

We recommend four easy walks on flat ground; the shortest is 1.5km, the longest 10km in the Stuarts Point area.



North Macleay Arm

Distance 6km — Easy. — Walk at low tide only

A BEAUTIFUL walk along roads and the river amongst the paperbarks, casuarinas, banksias and eucalypts.

THE WALK...

Park near the Holiday Park entrance.

Walk back along the road towards shops.

Turn right at the Community Hall, walk along Marine Parade to the end.

Stay right and take the path with steps down to the water's edge.

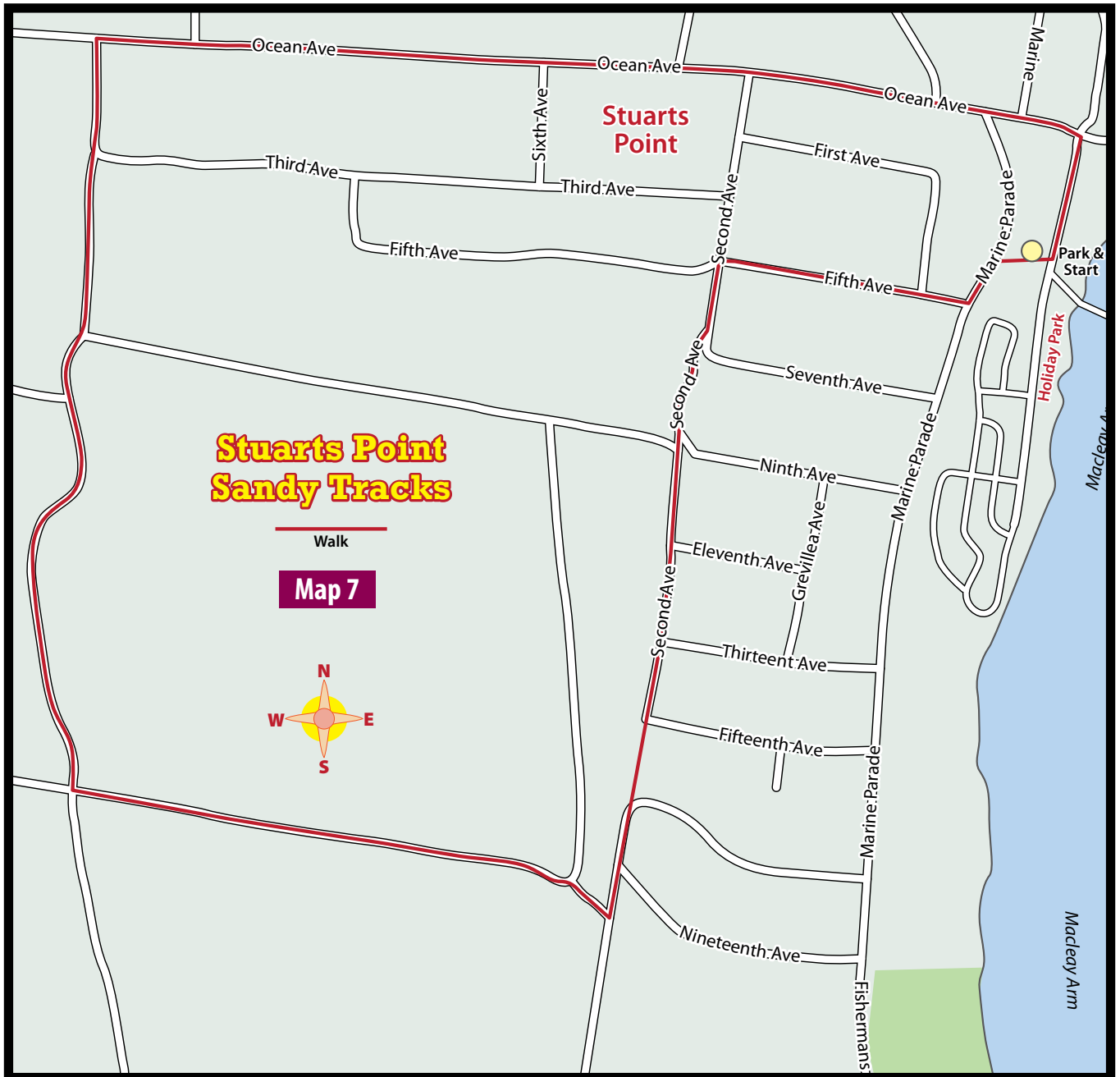
The path along the edge is narrow and sometimes a bit overgrown. Reeds and creepers can form snares; lift your feet to avoid those traps.



Walking on the North Macleay Arm track (CS).

After walking for about 2.5 km, the track is interrupted at a creek crossing near the Seventh Day Adventist Convention Centre. The path leading up the bank is a little bit back from the broken bridge towards Stuarts Point.

Walk up the bank and you come to a wide track. Turn left and walk back to Stuarts Point.



*"Keeping to the main road is easy,
but people love to be sidetracked."*

– Lao Tzu (6th century BCE)

Sandy Tracks

Distance 3.5km (can be extended) — Easy

THIS walk gives a good impression of the village of Stuarts Point and the adjoining coastal bushland.

THE WALK...

From the parking spot near the Holiday Park Entrance go to Marine Ave south and turn left. After about 50m turn right at Third Ave to Second Ave, then turn left. Walk along Second Ave. After a sealed section it turns into a sandy road.

Near the corner of Nineteenth Ave (on the left) there is a track turning right into bushland.

This is an area of sandy trails. Walk about 500m, then turn right towards the Tavern on Stuarts Point Road. Cross the road. Turn right and walk back on the footpath to Holiday Park car parking.

Or to extend this walk, turn next left and wander through the streets, the Sports Field and past the Public School on the northern side of Stuarts Point Road/Ocean Ave.

A stroll to the beach

1.5km or as far as you want to go — Easy

WHEN in Stuarts Point, crossing the bridge over the Macleay Arm is almost a must. Even just standing on the bridge, watching the fish or just the pattern of sunlight in the water can entertain for quite some time.

THE WALK...

From the car parking area cross the bridge.

Walk along the path through a variety of vegetation – from mangroves to pigface and beach spinifex – to the ocean.



Google Satellite image, over the bridge and through to the beach.

If you want to go further, you can turn right along the beach towards South West Rocks – as far as the Macleay river mouth. The distance is about 5km. Return the same way.

The other option is to turn left towards Grassy Head. See Walk to Grassy Head on the next page.



Stuarts Point to Grassy Head

10km — Easy



One of the locals (GO).

A circular walk along the beach and back on the footpath parallel to the road – or reverse

This walk begins with the stroll across the bridge to the beach.

Turn north and walk for about 2 km to the access to the Grassy Head Holiday Park. The track is made clearly visible by 4WD tyre marks.

Walk through the Holiday Park, perhaps take a rest at one of the picnic tables, and then proceed along Reserve Road to Grassy Head Road.

There is a footpath parallel to the road all the way to Stuarts Point Road. Turn left, back into the village of Stuarts Point and the carpark.

There are alternative options on the return walk.

- ✦ Walk 3.3km along Grassy Head Road, turn left. Walk about 1km on a sandy track. When you reach a track near the water, turn right. Another 2km back to the carpark.
- ✦ Walk about 4km along Grassy Head Road, then turn left to built-up areas of Stuarts Point to Walter Conn Road. There you may turn right into Fourth Ave or cross the Sports Fields or go as far as Marine Parade, then right and back to the carpark.



Start of North Arm Track (GO).



Stuarts Point bridge leading across to the beach (GO).

South West Rocks

Distance from Kempsey 36 km, 35 min

THE beauty of South West Rocks is the variety of landscapes and consequently the variety of walks with ever changing aspects.

Anybody interested in experiencing South West Rocks on foot will find plenty of well developed trails and some not widely known.

The township is defined by natural boundaries formed by the Macleay River mouth to the north, Trial Bay and the Pacific Ocean to the east, Smoky Cape with its Lighthouse to the south and the waterways around the fishing village of Jerseyville to the west.

Before reaching South West Rocks, near Jerseyville, there is a track through the restored wetland.

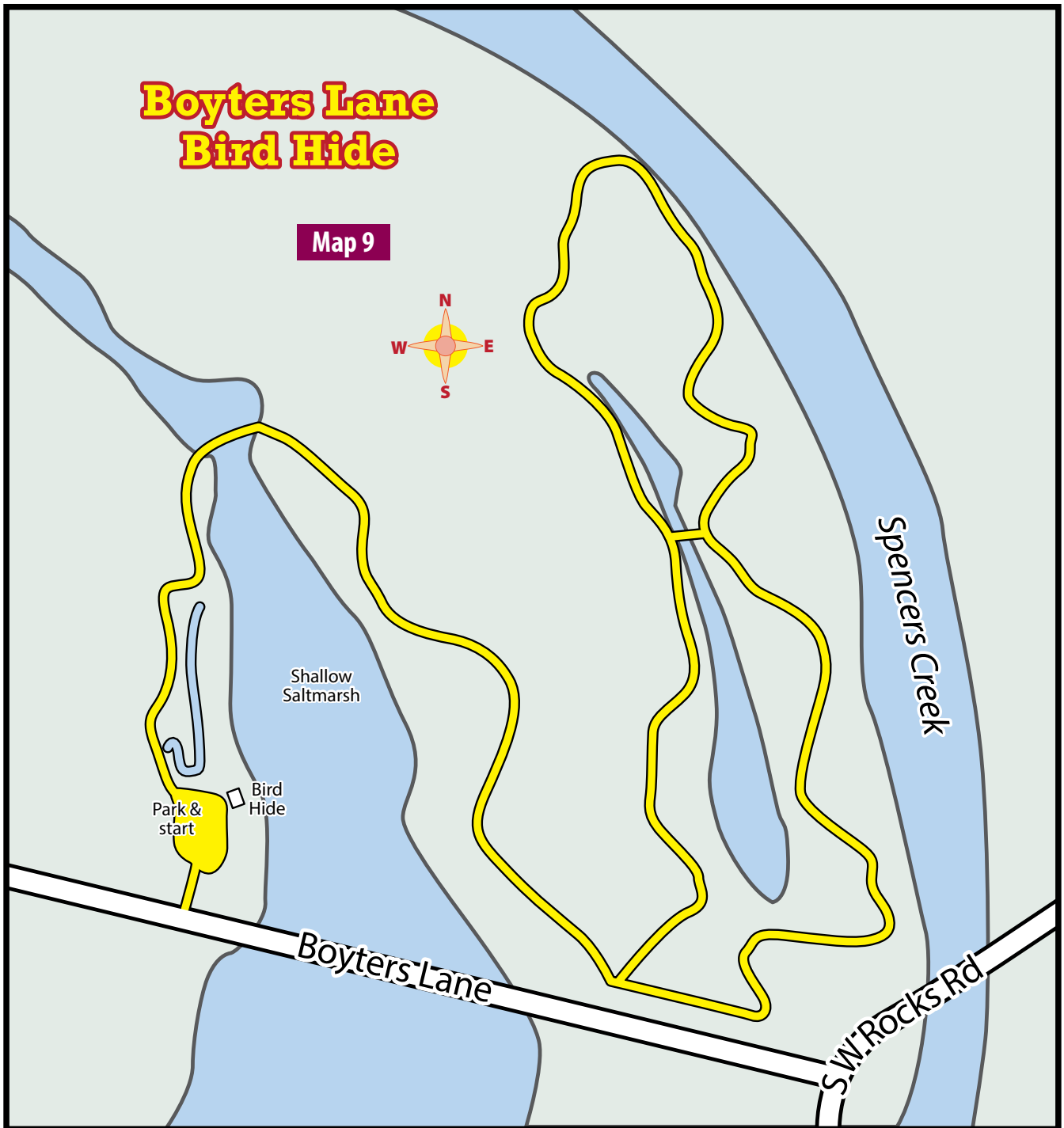
At Back Creek there are extensive mangrove forests. Towards the river mouth you find a track through the dunes and a lovely beach.

Between South West Rocks and Arakoon is a well maintained path parallel to the road, shared by bicyclists and pedestrians, and there is Main Beach, which always invites walks towards Trial Bay Gaol.

To the south, Arakoon and Hat Head National Park at Smoky Cape offer a multitude of walks. The landscape is varied with sandy beaches, hilly and even steep tracks, rainforest, heathlands and great views. Encounters with kangaroos and wallabies are practically guaranteed. Smoky Cape is part of Hat Head National Park, therefore dogs are not allowed.



The South West Rocks, Trial Bay (CS).



*Saint Augustine: "Solvitur ambulando.
It is solved by walking".*

Boyters Lane – Bird Hide

*Distances: From Kempsey 31km, South West Rocks 3km
2km of signposted walkways near the Bird Hide
2km return on Boyters Lane — Easy*

THIS is an easy and attractive stroll through the regenerated wetlands with a variety of trees and shrubs and the chance to spot numerous birds.

THE WALK...

Just before crossing Spencers Creek and reaching South West Rocks, Boyters Lane is on the left. There is plenty of parking in front of the bird hide with information panels.

From the bird hide you can follow the signposted walkways which, in part, are laid out in a figure of eight pattern.

The site was rehabilitated by Kempsey Shire Council who planted 15,000 native trees and shrubs, protected and improved eight hectares of mangrove and salt-marsh, built the walkway and constructed the bird hide and information hut.



Start of walk at bird hide (CS).



Back Creek to Macleay River Breakwall

4.5 km — Easy

A PLEASANT bush and beach walk close to the township. The track is not clearly marked, but you can't seriously get lost with the beach on one side, the mangroves and road on the other side.

THE WALK...

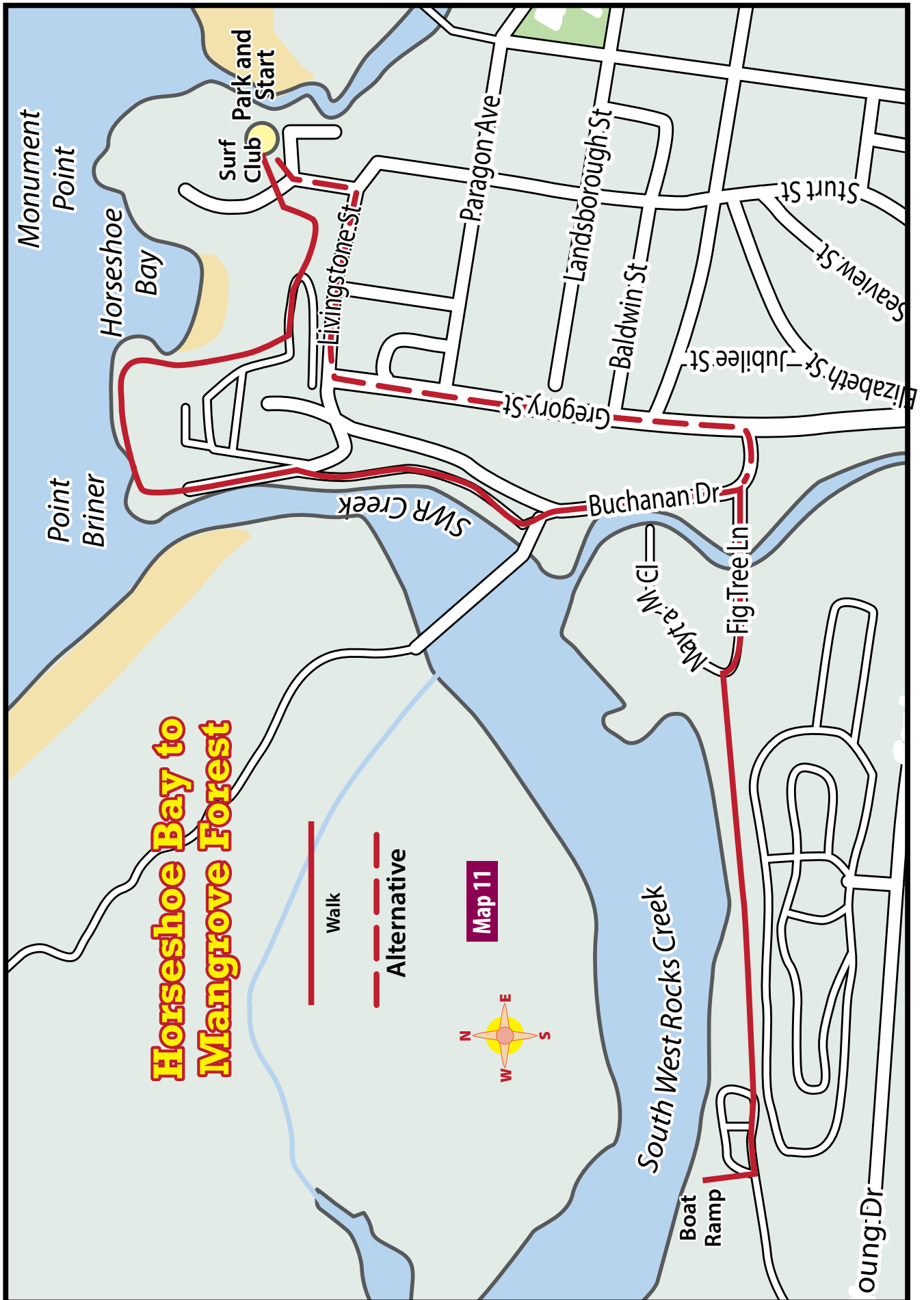
Start at the foot bridge, but always go on the bush track from the footbridge to the breakwall. This way, the track is easier to find than in the other direction.

When you reach the breakwall, turn right and return to the foot bridge by walking along the beach.

Note: This walk can be reversed, Walk along the breakwall towards the ocean. You can go as far as the point and clamber down the rock wall. For easier access, walk down to the sand about 300m before the point, then parallel to the wall to the beach.



Back Beach from the breakwall (GO).



Horseshoe Bay to Mangrove Forest

Walking distance 2km one way

Return the same way or through the CBD — 2km to 2.5km

AN easy walk that takes in a variety of South West Rocks characteristics.

Start at the South West Rocks Surf Lifesaving Club.

Walk along the path around Horseshoe Bay and then on the boardwalk around Point Briner with the old Pilot Station.

Follow the path along Back Creek towards the large footbridge. Go through the car parking area, past this footbridge and along Buchanan Drive. At the corner of Fig Tree Lane keep right towards the path leading between the Holiday Park and Back Creek to the boat ramp.

Especially at high tide, the view of the mangroves reflected on the water is beautiful and more often than not, you will see pelicans and other water birds. There are picnic tables for a rest.

Return along the path to the corner of Fig Tree Lane.

Option 1: Retrace your steps along the Holiday Park, Fig Tree Lane and Buchanan Drive towards Point Briner and Horseshoe Bay to the starting point.

Option 2: Walk along Fig Tree Lane straight up to Gregory Street. Walk 500m along Gregory Street, turn right into Livingstone Street – with Horseshoe Bay Park on your left, shops and the Seabreeze Hotel on your right – back to the Surf Lifesaving Club.



Mangroves at Back Creek (CS).





To Arakoon and Trial Bay Gaol

Up to 9km — Easy

THE most popular walk in South West Rocks is the beach walk towards Arakoon and Trial Bay Gaol. An alternative or variation, is the well developed and shady track parallel to Landsborough Street and Phillip Drive.

There are numerous options to shorten or extend a walk in this area. You may need to consider the tides.

THE WALK...

Park in the area near the Surf Lifesaving Club.

For a complete circuit of 9 km, walk past the playground and along the footpath with holiday apartments on the right and Saltwater Creek on the left. At the T-junction turn right and after 50m keep right on the footpath through Brighton Park.

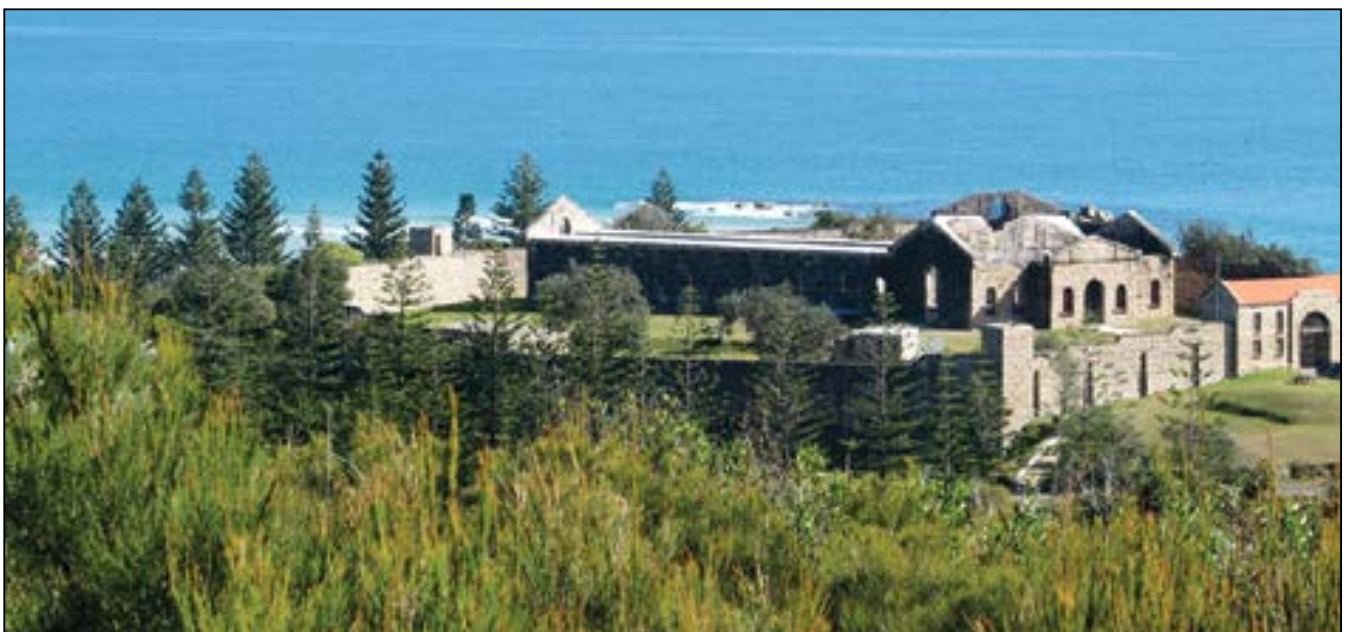
After 700m, near the roundabout, turn left to follow the path. After walking 3km in total, you reach the 'Big 4 Sunshine Resort' with Café.

200m on, you pass Fishos Trail, a beach access, on the left. After another 700m you reach Caldwell Road. Turn left towards Trial Bay Gaol. After 400m you pass another beach access on the left. You can continue on the road to the historic Gaol where a National Parks shop with information and the museum are located. There is also a Café and Restaurant, named The Kiosk, in the grounds which you pass before reaching the Gaol.

From there you can walk down the hill through the camping area and return to South West Rocks along the beach. The total distance from the Surf Lifesaving Club to Trial Bay Gaol is 5km. The walk along the beach is approx. 4km.



Trial Bay Gaol entrance (CS).



Beautiful now, but not so nice when a working prison (CS).

Smoky Cape

Smoky Cape provides some of the most beautiful walks in the world. For the complete 7km Smoky Cape walk you can start at Trial Bay Goal and finish at Smoky Cape Lighthouse (Captain Cook Lookout) or reverse the direction.

Strong walkers might return the way they came or even extend the route with the beach walk at Trial Bay for a start or finish at South West Rocks. At Gap Beach is another possible extension, a walk that can also be done separately.

For walks in one direction, transport needs to be pre-arranged.

Access points for shorter sections are at the Duck Pond (Overshot Dam) at Little Bay or the parking area at Gap Road above Gap Beach.

There are other tracks over the headlands, but we have not included them here as they are not marked and are not recommended by National Parks rangers at the time of publication of this book.

The historic Trial Bay Goal is also the starting point for walks to Little Bay via Monument Hill with several options for the return walk.



Smoky Cape Lighthouse (CS).

Smoky Cape is part of the extensive Hat Head National Park. Other National Parks along the Macleay Valley Coast are Yarriabandini at Yarrahapinni Mountain to the north; Goolawah and Limeburners Creek to the south. Maria National Park just south of Kempsey is also mentioned in this book on page 85. Dogs are not allowed in any National Park.



Three Walks at Monument Hill

THERE are several variations for walking in this area. Start at the car park in front of Trial Bay Gaol.

1. Walk

To the monument and return, 1.3km. — Easy

From the car park go approx 100m back to some steps on the left. This is the start of the well defined track which leads uphill through casuarinas. Along the way you'll find a lookout towards the ocean and one towards the bay and the mountains.

At the monument are good views of the ocean and explanatory signs about the history. The monument itself was built as a tribute to the German internees who died in Trial Bay Gaol during World War I. Return to the car park or continue on next walk.

2. Walk

Total of approx 3.5km. — Easy

The walk might seem longer with a rise to the top of Monument Hill and marked variations in the landscape.

Continue from the monument further uphill and then down to Little Bay. At the summit the view opens up to the south and the vegetation changes markedly. Especially in spring, there is an abundance of wild flowers. You might see wallabies grazing or resting on grassy patches particularly towards the cliffs.

At Little Bay there are picnic facilities and toilets (all being rebuilt at the time of this publication). The small beach is framed by colourful cliffs. Due to strong currents, swimming can be dangerous.

From Little Bay you can loop back via Bridle Track, Powder Magazine Track and Monument Hill Track.

3. Walk

4.5km. — Easy

You may like to include a walk through the park to Overshot Dam, or as it is known locally, the Duck Pond. Several mobs of kangaroos live in this area providing fabulous photo opportunities.

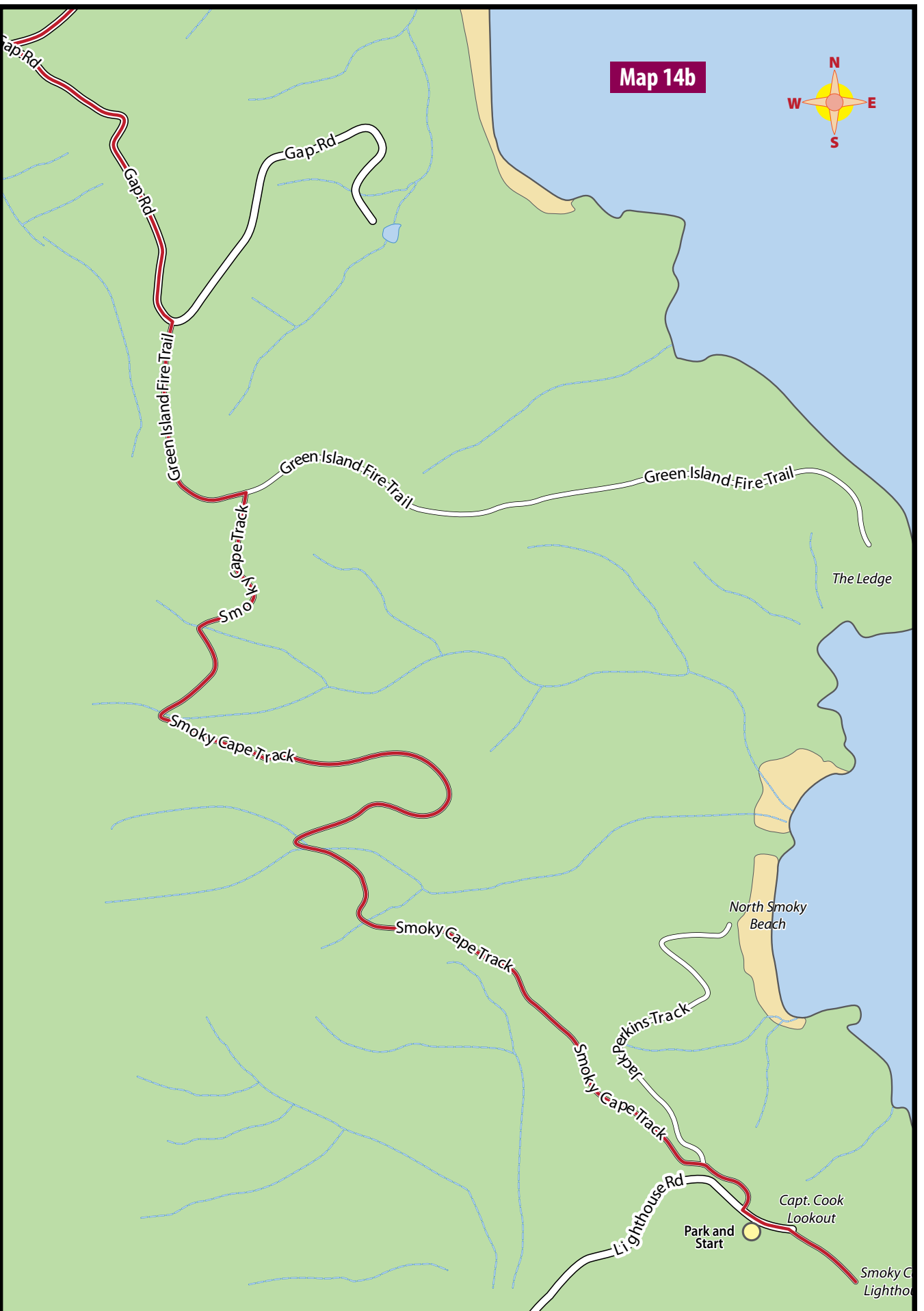
A variation on the return from Little Bay is following the Bridle Track to the Trial Bay Gaol Access Road, turn left, walk about 50m, cross the road and turn right into the beach access road. Another 50m and you'll see National Parks office facilities on the right. Just before the buildings is a track with a boom gate leading towards Trial Bay Gaol.

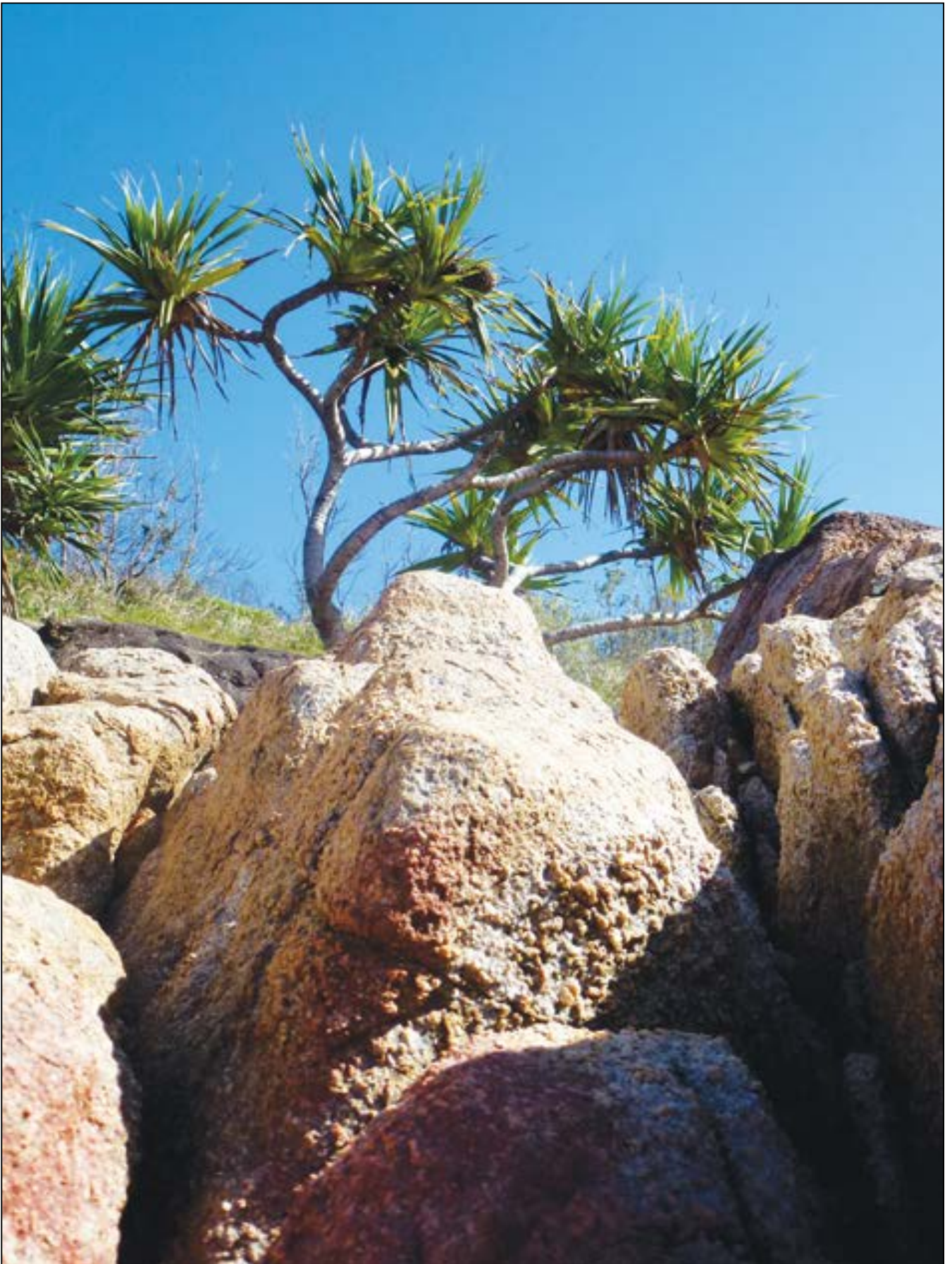
Yet another variation is finishing the walk along the beach. Keep going at the National Parks buildings and through a parking area until you reach the beach. Turn right towards the Gaol.

For further information

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/monument-hill-walking-track>







Pandanus palm among granite rock, which is in abundance in the South West Rocks area. Local granite was used in the past as building material in Trial Bay Gaol (CS).

From the Gaol to Smoky Cape Lighthouse

Little Bay to Smoky Cape Lighthouse 5.5km with two steep sections.

Moderate – difficult.

YOU can start with the Monument Hill walk from Trial Bay Gaol carpark to Overshot Dam at Little Bay or start at Overshot Dam.

Starting on the left side of Overshot Dam, the Little Bay Walking Track leads up the steep ridge of Little Smoky Mountain. This is the steepest part of the walk to the lighthouse, but absolutely worthwhile with good views and interesting vegetation.



Little Smoky Mountain (CS).

After 500m, just below the summit, the path leads to the inland side of the mountain with marked changes in vegetation. From here, the 1.5km downhill track takes you to the unsealed Gap Road. At a fork, you can go left on the North Gap Beach Track and include Gap Beach (for more details see page 47) or keep right and continue to a T-section.

Watch out for cars, turn left and follow the road uphill. You reach a large levelled area. This provides car parking if walking shorter sections, especially around Gap Beach.

Heading for the lighthouse, keep walking south to the boom gate where the track continues as Green Island Firetrail. After an uphill section of about 400m you reach the intersection of the Firetrail and Smoky Cape Tracks.



Green Island Trail (CS).

Here you get the first view of Smoky Cape Lighthouse. Follow the signs to the lighthouse. The track winds along for about 2km with minor ups and downs, past several gullies with running water over the track after rain.

Below the lighthouse is the picnic area at Captain Cook Lookout with toilets and carpark.

Only a little more effort is required for the steep ascent to the lighthouse to be rewarded with sweeping views.



The lighthouse from Little Smoky Beach (CS).

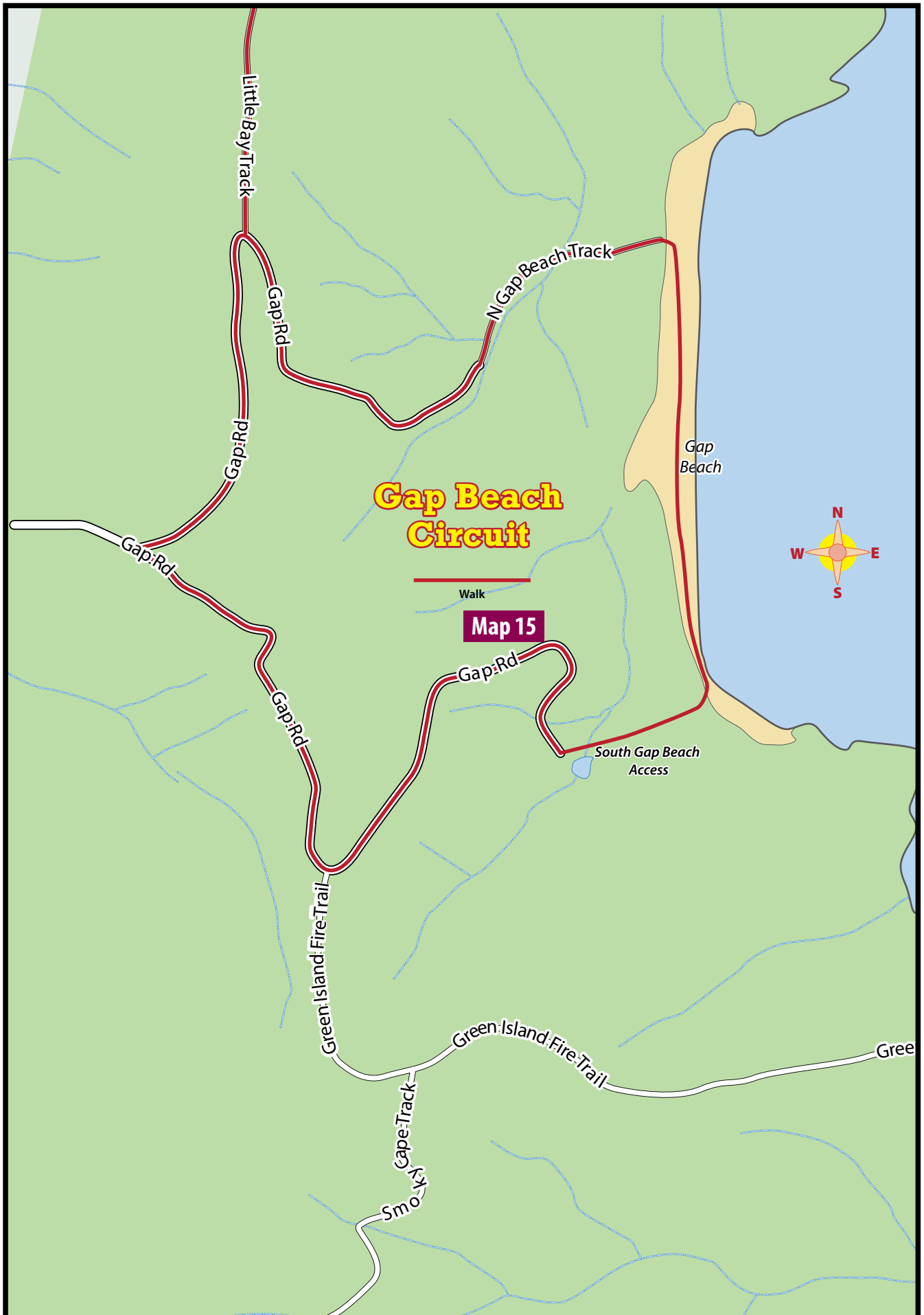
If you are planning further exploration of Smoky Cape walking tracks, you might find information at the Trial Bay Gaol Visitors Centre or go to www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/hat-head-national-park.



ABOVE: Paperbarks around Little Bay (CS).

BELOW: Building a perfect trap (CS).





Gap Beach Circuit

A walk with some steep sections through rainforest areas and along the beach.

5 km — Moderate to Difficult

How to get there: 35 km from Kempsey; 6.5km from SWR via Arakoon

FROM Arakoon Road turn into Gap Beach Road. After a sealed section it turns into a dirt road which is best navigated with 4W Drive vehicles. There are rutted, steep sections and driving this road in wet weather is not recommended.

After 2km you come to a flat area with plenty of parking space.

THE WALK...

At the southern end of that area you see the start of the Green Island Fire Trail, but to walk the Gap Beach circuit, you turn back in the direction you came from.

Walk along the road you have driven up. Watch out for cars – especially during holiday seasons. After 600m turn right towards North Gap Beach.



A fork in the road at Gap Beach Circuit (CS).

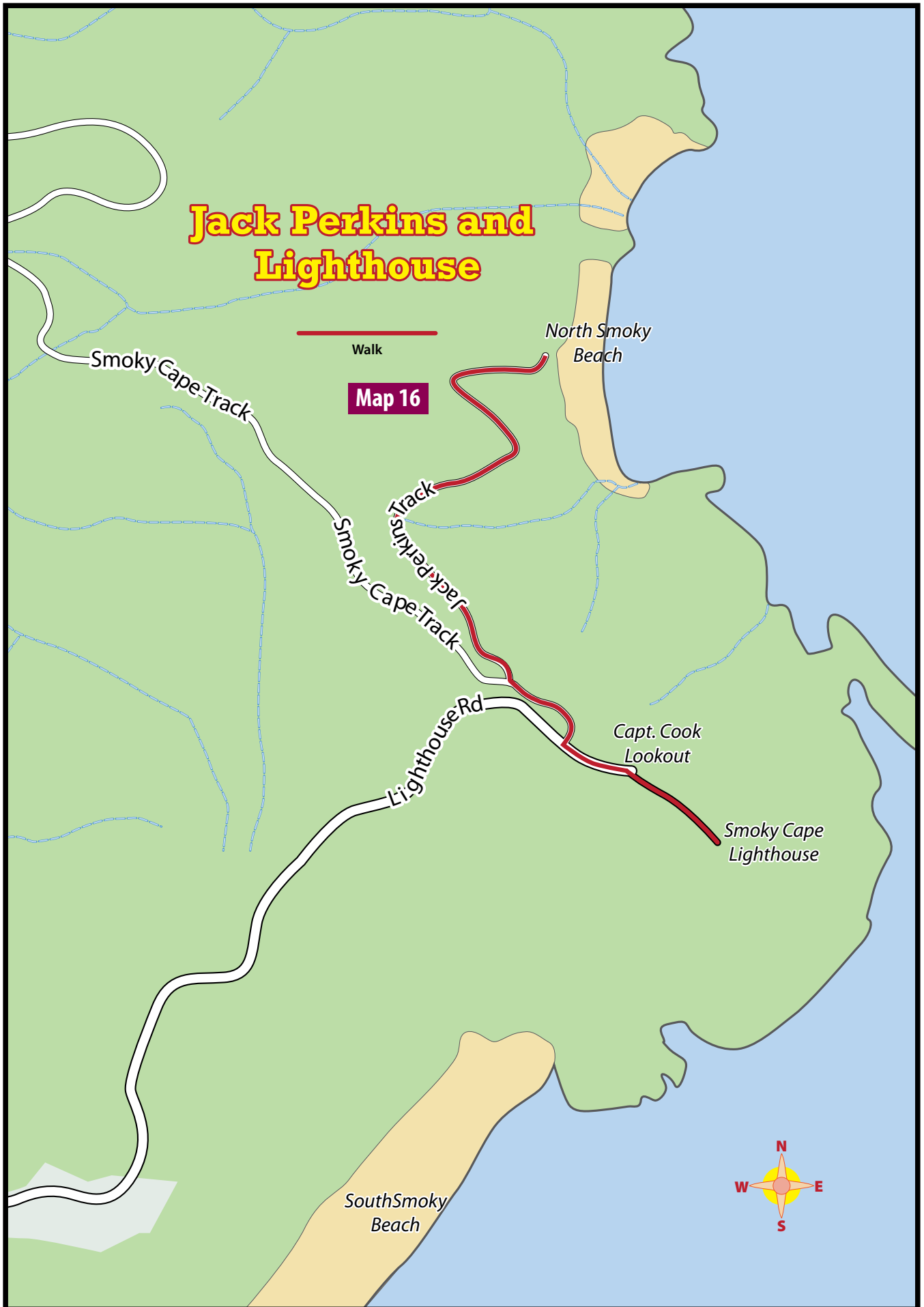
Follow this road for about 500m until you see the Little Bay Walking Track straight ahead.

Turn right and follow the Management Road down towards the beach. After about 600m the road ends and a walking track leads to North Gap Beach.

Walk along the beach for about 1.2km to the southern access.

From South Gap Beach take the walking track and then the very steep road back to the car park at the beginning of the Green Island Fire Trail.

Picnic tables at North and at South Gap Beach invite rest. There are toilets at South Gap Beach.



Jack Perkins Track and Lighthouse

2km return — Moderate to Difficult (short, but very steep)

Starting point is at the Captain Cook Lookout.

BEFORE venturing down to North Smoky Beach, we recommend walking up to the lighthouse. The access is also very steep, a good warm up for the Jack Perkins track.

From the lookout the Jack Perkins Track is a signposted steep path that leads down to North Smoky Beach with a boardwalk at the last section above the beach.

This is an unpatrolled beach, but it is very inviting for a swim. In the past, it has been a dedicated nudist beach. We understand that clothes are still optional.

People often ask, who Jack Perkins was. Here is the answer.

Before the Trial Bay Goal and Smoky Cape area became part of Hat Head National Park, it was a State Recreation Area managed by the Trial Bay Goal Trust. Jack Perkins (1937- 1996), a local of South West Rocks, was an active member of the Trust. He was passionate about the protection of the area for the common good and could often be found swimming at North Smoky Beach.



North Smoky Beach at the end of the Jack Perkins Track (CS).



German monument in memory of internees who died at the gaol — 1915-18 (CS).



Main Beach, South West Rocks (GO).

Hat Head

HAT Head is a quiet holiday village. Fishing, swimming and surfing are the main activities on offer. Korogoro Creek is always safe for canoeing, snorkelling and swimming. It is best at high tide.

There are several beautiful walks — easy and flat along the Creek, more demanding along the cliffs to the south. The walk around the Korogoro Point is recommended for experienced walkers only.

Every walk starts near the picnic shelter at the caravan park. To get there, drive straight through the village, past the Bowling Club and navigate several speed humps. Inside the caravan park, drive past cabins and camping sites on the left until you see the large picnic shelter. There is parking available under shady trees and public toilets are nearby.

Going straight ahead from the parking area takes you to the boat ramp near the mouth of the creek and to the beach. There is always the option of a beach walk towards Smoky Cape.



Walking at Hat Head Beach on a day when there was a bushfire at Korogoro Point (CS).

The walks we recommend all begin with a walk across the footbridge to the south.

- Around “The Hat” – Korogoro Point
- The Easy Way
- Going South



Circumnavigating Korogoro Point — “The Hat”

Distance approx 4km, allow 2 hours or more — Moderate to Difficult

WALK south through caravan park and cross the foot bridge. Keep left. The well maintained track leads north, parallel to the creek. After 600m turn east above the sea where the track becomes a little more difficult to walk and is recommended for “experienced bush walkers only”. A sloping rock face has to be crossed and might be slippery when wet. There are a few high rock steps up and down along the track.

As you look down into the sea, you might see schools of fish, dolphins or turtles.

After about 500m it is possible to go down to a little beach. The track is not defined. Swimming depends on tide and surf.

Another 500m further along, there is a sign warning of a dangerous track ahead. You can go straight ahead with care to the very end onto the point and then back-track to this fork.

From here, the track is steep for about 200m and can be rather hot. Often there are kangaroos around in this area.



The Saddle at Korogoro Point, Hat Head (CS).

Now you just keep going south high above the sea. During the season, the point and the track south offer great opportunities for whale watching.

There is a small rocky island below. The very adventurous may want to go down the steep grassy slope. The island itself can only be reached at low tide.

Continue to The Gap. From there turn north either at the edge of the shrubs or on the road back to the pedestrian bridge and the caravan park.

Obviously, you can do the walk the other way round. The walk can also begin and end at The Gap. However, crossing the footbridge is great for spotting fish, including stingrays, or simply be dazzled by the sunlight playing on the water.



Hat Head – The Easy Way

Distance approx 5km — Easy

WALK south across the foot bridge and, keeping right, up towards The Gap.

About 50m after the end of the bridge, turn right into a path. Follow the path at the back of houses to Kinchela Street. Turn right and down towards the creek. Follow the path along the edge of the creek for 1.7km to the traffic bridge on Hat Head Road.

Cross the bridge, then cross the road leading into the village and, going straight ahead through Les Dunford Road, follow the unsealed track to the beach. Turn right, walk along the beach for about 1.5km to the mouth of the Korogoro Creek. Turn right and right again back into the parking area at the Holiday Park.

As an alternative to the walk on the beach on a windy or hot day, you can walk under shady trees through the village. Take the quiet back streets along the edge of the village. From the bridge go through Les Dunford Road towards the beach. Turn right into Hutcheson Street, further along named Bay Street, ending in the Holiday Park.

At the halfway point of this walk, near the traffic bridge, there is a reserve on the right with a picnic table. A good place to take a break.



Crossing the footbridge at Hat Head (GO).



Hat Head — Connors Hill Trail

4.6km, easy to medium

Parts of this walk lead through Hat Head National Park. Please observe the regulations. For Connors Hill Trail you can start at The Gap. Walk 100m towards Connors Beach.

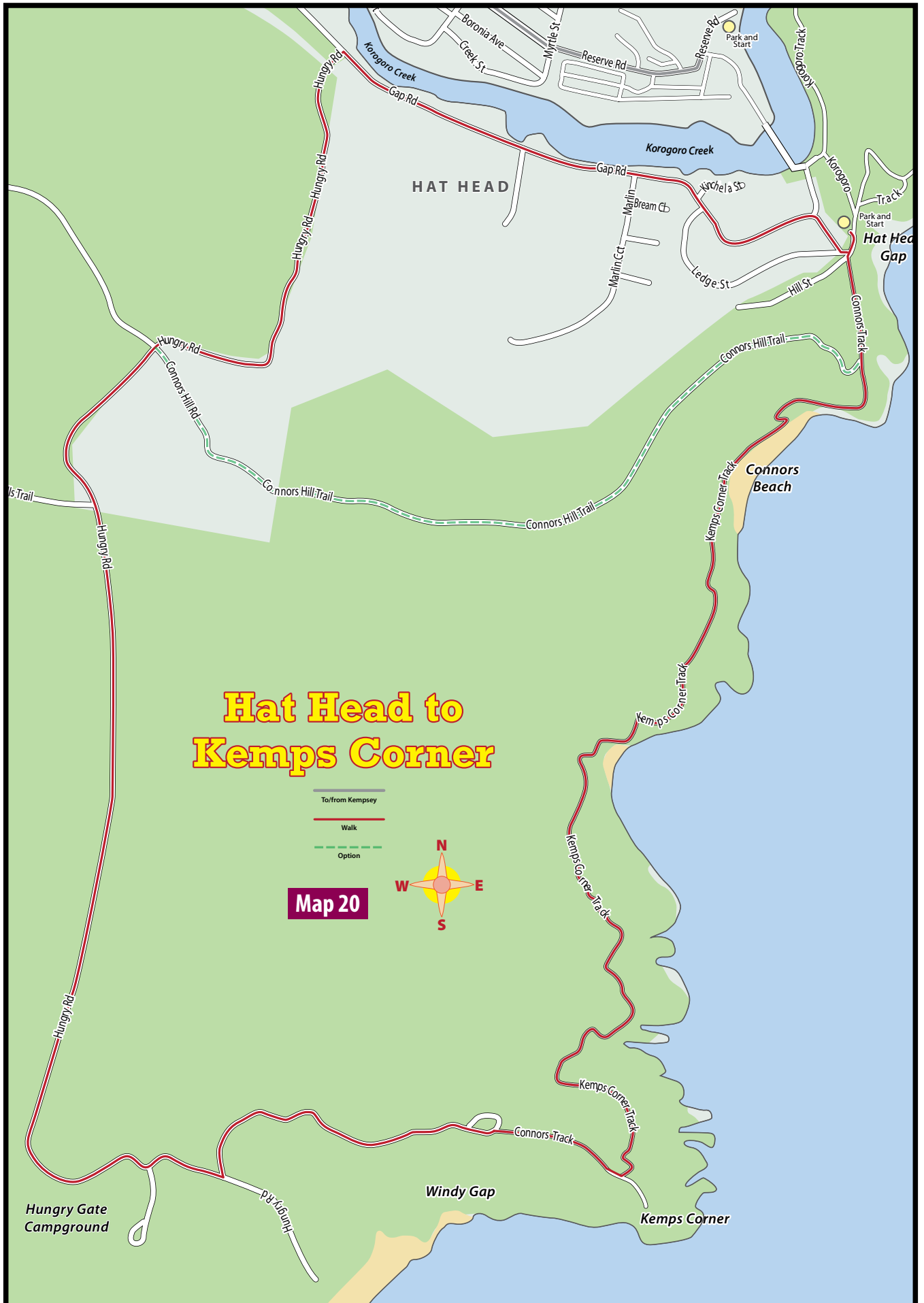
Where a fence on the left protects the walkers from falling off the cliff, turn right towards the top of the hill. Initially, the path is not clearly defined, just follow the Wallaby tracks upwards and soon the fire trail is clear. It's a bit of a climb, but walking slowly and stopping frequently to enjoy the view back to the ocean makes it easy. At the top you enter a forest some people call "enchanted".

Then walk down the hill and past the water reservoir to Hungry Road. Turn right, follow the road for 1km to Gap Road. Cross the road. Turn right at the creek. Follow the path along the water's edge which leads back towards the footbridge and The Gap.

At the corner of Gap Road and Kinchela Street there are two options.

1. Turn left at Kinchela Street, go past the one house, then up the slope through the bush. When you reach Gap Street, go straight ahead through the car parking area to Korogoro Track. Turn right, after 200 m you reach the carpark at The Gap.
2. Stay on Gap Road which becomes Home Street, then left into Gap Street, back to the carpark at The Gap.





Going South

Distance approx 12km — Moderate

The walk from the village of Hat Head leads towards Crescent Head. The track winds along the side of the cliffs to Kemps Corner. It is about 4km to Hungry Gate camp ground.

This is part of Hat Head National Park and no dogs are allowed.

THE WALK...

As for the other walks at Hat Head, start at the picnic shelter at the Holiday Park and walk across the footbridge — or start at The Gap.

The first section leads to beautiful Connors Beach. The track from The Gap to Connors is clearly marked and well maintained. It provides easily accessible opportunities for whale watching during the migration season. Dolphins can be seen at any time of the year. In spring there is an abundance of wild flowers.



Hardenbergia beside the track from the Gap to Connors Beach (CS).

A little bit of rock hopping is required when reaching the beach. The sandy beach invites to linger, but it is unpatrolled and swimming might be dangerous.

The track continues at the southern end of the beach. The short, but steep and rocky ascent is not clearly marked.

The track doesn't lead down to the next beach, Third Beach, but if you look carefully, you might be able to find a path used by fishermen about 20m from the gully crossing at the northern end. This beach is another quiet spot to stop and rest.

The main track in this area can be a bit overgrown and full attention should be given to every foot step.

Further along, the track is wider, providing constant ocean views as it leads towards Windy Gap and Kemps Corner. You may return from here, or indeed from any point along the track.

If you proceed to Hungry Gate camp ground, you can return to Hat Head via Hungry Road. The Connors Hill Trail (see map) provides a variation. It is quite steep but is well worth the effort.



The Gap Beach, Hat Head (GO).



Local residents enjoying Gap Beach (CS).

Crescent Head

CRESCENT Head is famous for its right-hand surf breaks, the perfectly located holiday park, swimming and drifting in Killick Creek, long sandy beaches and the friendly village atmosphere. Crescent Head and Limeburners National Park to the south also offer opportunities for beautiful walks.

The most popular walk leads from the Surf Club to the lookout at Little Nobby. It is an easy 1km return walk which needs no further description.

Another popular option is a walk from the Surf Club across the footbridge and along the beach towards Hat Head. It is about 2.5km to the beach access at Richardsons Crossing. Of course, any point of return can be chosen.

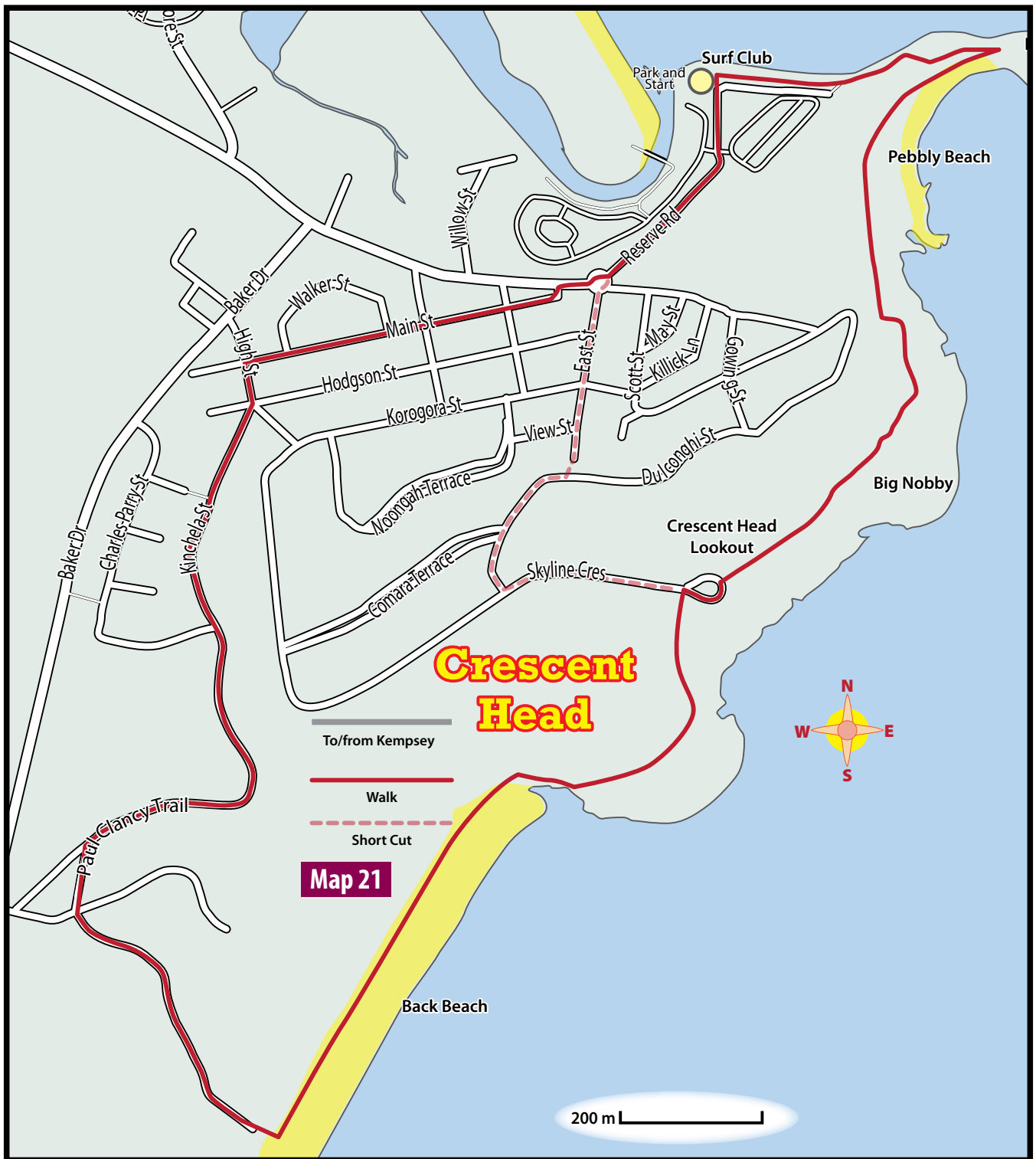
An easy walk to Back Beach can be started at the swimming pool at Baker Drive and last but not least, not so easy, but absolutely spectacular and varied is the walk over the top of Big Nobby.



View of Little Nobby from the top of Big Nobby (GO).

A few kilometres south of Crescent Head, there are further walks along the beach and at Big Hill. Still a bit further south is Point Plomer with a large camping area and a short marked track to the headland.

Big Hill and Point Plomer are part of Limeburners Creek National Park. Dogs are not allowed.



*"Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be
the only beast which ruminates when walking"*
Henry David Thoreau

Over The Top

Approx 5km — Moderate to difficult

THIS walk up and down the steep slopes of Big Nobby should be taken slowly. Frequent stops allow you to take in the fabulous views along the coast.

Start from the car park near the Crescent Head Surf Club.

As you walk towards Little Nobby there are always surfers to be watched on the left, the northern side of the track. As you come to Pebbly Beach on your right, walk along the edge of the golf course up towards the water towers. Be aware of any golf players and the possibility of stray balls.

Have a look at the paintings by local Indigenous artist Milton Budge and intricate mosaics designed by artist Guy Crosley on the water towers.

Keep going upwards on the far left side of the golf course where a seat invites you to rest and a track starts leading up to the lookout near the large water tower on top of Big Nobby. Here you can see for kilometres to both north and the south and, during the migrating season, there is a good chance to spot whales.

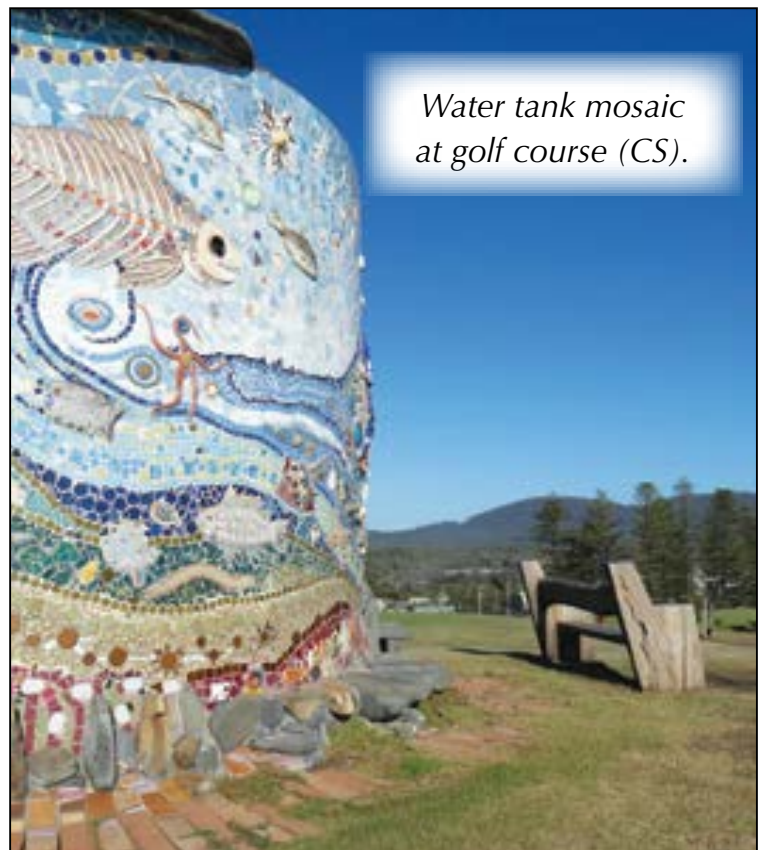
Walk around the left side of the water tower. At the end of the low traffic barriers you find an unmarked path leading down into the scrub towards a monument for a fisherman who drowned more than 100 years ago. Watch your steps. The path is narrow, rocky and sometimes grasses form snares. The path continues past the monument and leads down to Back Beach. The rock formations at the foot of Big Nobby are an invitation to sit and have another rest.

Walk approx 400m along the beach and turn right at the vehicle access. Walk another 400m past car parking areas, then turn right through the boom gates into Paul Clancy Trail.

The path leads back to the built up area of Crescent Head.

Follow Kinchela Street and wind your way through the streets past the Tavern and Country Club back to the Surf Club.

Variation: If you prefer a shorter and easier route back from the large Water Tower to the Surf Club, walk about 300m from the lookout along Skyline Crescent and turn right into Dulconghi Street. Walk along Dulconghi Street. Opposite house No 52 steps lead to East Street. Walk down East Street, past the Tavern and along Reserve Road back to the Surf Club.





"Walking is the most underrated form of exercise". Brianna Steinhilber

From the Swimming Pool to Back Beach

3km return — Easy

TAKE this track if you are looking for a stroll away from the village hustle and bustle.

Start at the car park at the swimming pool off Baker Drive.

Cross Baker Drive, and walk up Charles Perry Street, take the first left to Kinchela Street. Turn right. At the end of the built-up area you reach the Paul Clancy Trail. Walk for about 600m where you reach the unsealed access road to Back Beach. Turn left. Watch for cars; especially during holiday times there can be a fair bit of traffic. It's about 400m to the beach.

Here you can turn north for the short section towards Big Nobby or south towards Goolawah Beach and Big Hill as far as you want to go. Be aware that this is a dogs off-the-leash beach and it is accessed by vehicles.



Crescent Head Back Beach (GO).



A vigorous five-mile walk will do more good for an unhappy but otherwise healthy adult than all the medicine and psychology in the world. – Paul Dudley White

Big Hill Rainforest Walking Track

1.4 km loop — Medium

BIG Hill is 11 km south of Crescent Head, at the entrance point to Limeburners National Park. A beautiful walk starts right here at the car parking and picnic area.

To warm up before tackling the steep ascent on the seaward side of Big Hill we recommend a pleasant stroll along the creek where you can see plenty of bird life. Return to the car parking area to begin the rainforest loop.

Here is the National Parks' description of the rainforest walk.

"Starting at the picnic area by the beach, this short loop trail winds around the top of the headland, providing sweeping views of the pristine coastline and rocky shores below.

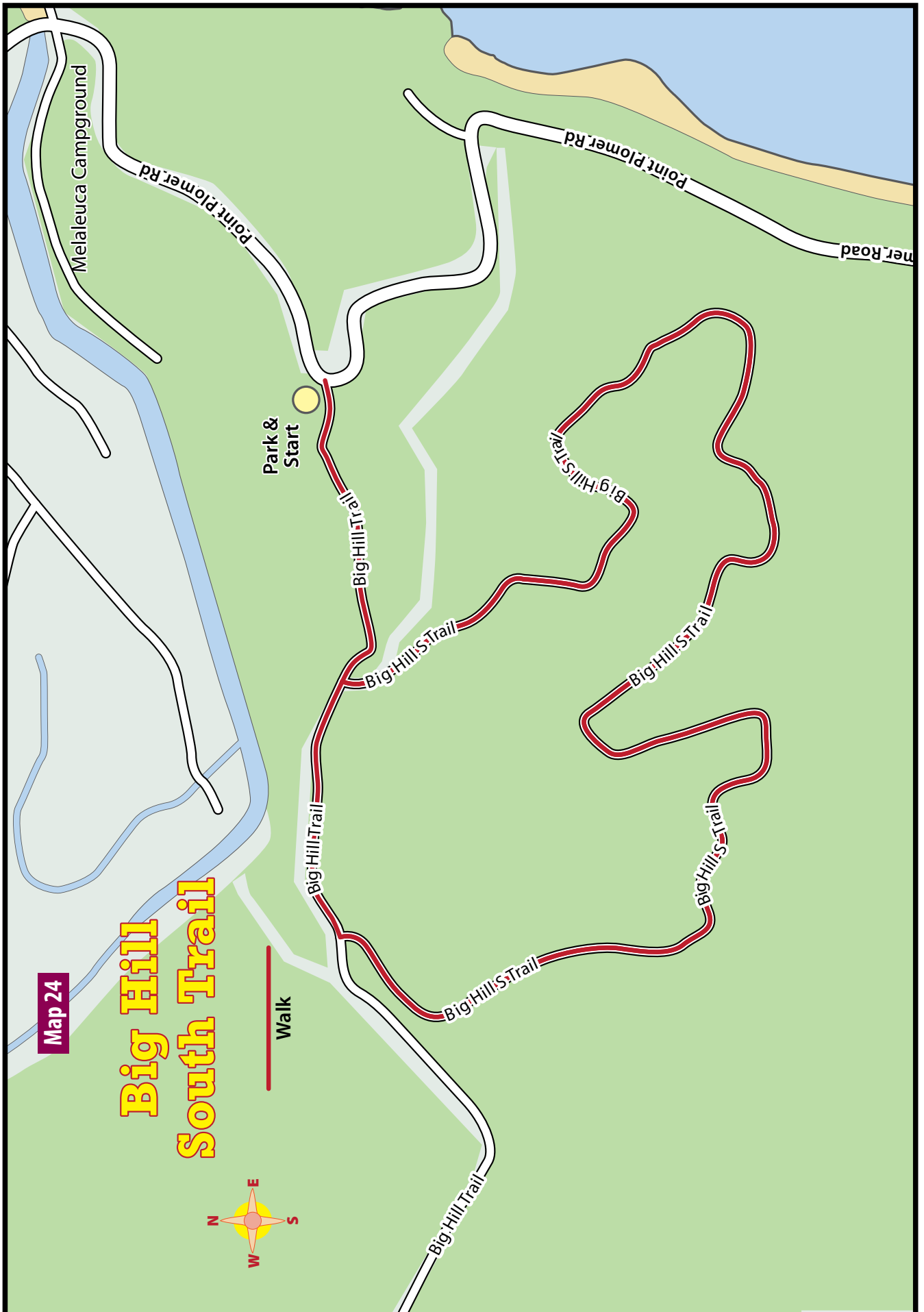
"Find a spot on the headland to sit and take in the untouched beauty around you. In winter and spring, it also makes for a great vantage point for whalewatching.

"The walk meanders through low heath vegetation and pandanus palms before taking you into rare coastal rainforest. The strangler figs, coastal blackbutt and large variety of rainforest species create a striking backdrop for the abundance of wildlife and birds you'll find in the rainforest. At sunset, you might even see microbats flying through the canopy."

From: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/big-hill-rainforest-walking-track



Big Hill track (CS).



Big Hill South Trail

5km — Easy

A beautiful walk with varied landscapes. In spring there is an abundance of wildflowers. The walk starts 12.5km south of Crescent Head.

From the National Park pay station at Limeburners Creek drive up Big Hill on Point Plomer Road for 1km. At the top of the hill, at a sharp bend, the trail starts on the right side of the road. There is some space for parking.

Walk through the boom gate. At a fork keep right, going downhill. At the bottom of the hill keep left. With extensive wetlands on the right and the hill on the left, follow the track. There are no further forks, the track eventually leads back to the trail near the top of the hill. Turn right and backtrack to Point Plomer Road.



Wedge tailed eagle over Big Hill (GO).



Big Hill view towards Point Plomer (CS).



Pebbly Beach, between Little Nobby and Big Nobby (CO).



Surfers at Crescent Head (CS).

Forest Walks

IN an area with expansive National Parks as well as State Forests, there are many interesting walks under trees, in the bush, in the forests. However, as this guide is the result of walks explored on weekday mornings by a group of seniors, no remote locations are included.

There are descriptions of walks under trees in the previous sections, like the two circuits at Big Hill and the walks at Smoky Cape. In this final section are five recommendations for walks in State Forests and one in Maria River National Park. Some routes also go past private land, but always on public roads. None of them require a long drive from Kempsey.

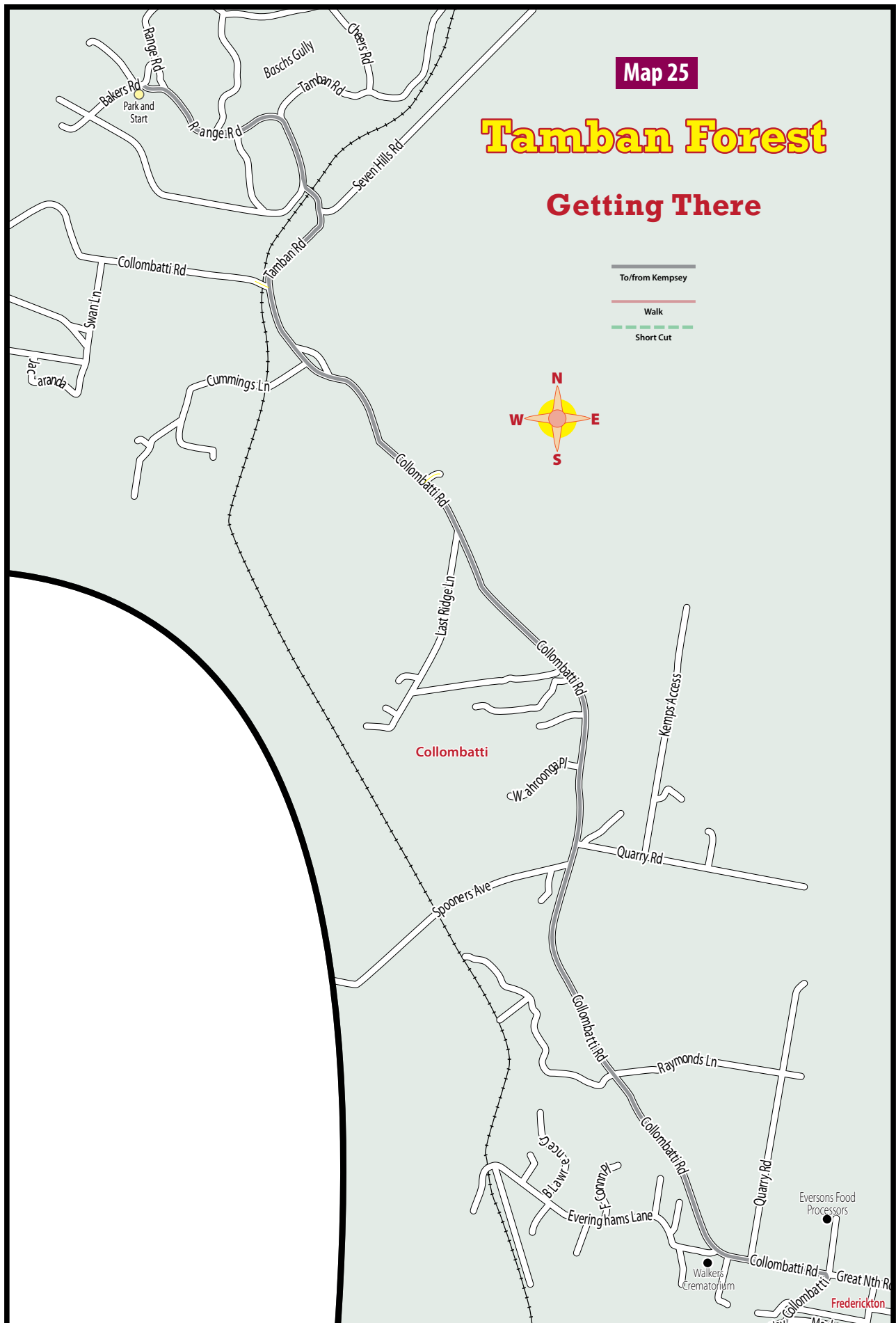
State Forests are managed by the Forestry Corporation. While their logging plans and practice take regeneration and the needs of wildlife into account, they are primarily a business enterprise, therefore logging is the priority. There might be areas where work is in progress and access prohibited or limited. Please respect their instructions. There might also be changes, such as recently cleared areas where the roads are not shaded anymore. Roads, which are named on maps and are generally well maintained, might have deteriorated.

Walkers also need to be mindful of the weather. We don't recommend going on any of the following walks on windy days. National Parks and State Forests might be closed on days of high and extreme fire danger. Access roads and walking tracks might get slippery or boggy after heavy rain.

The following walks are only a small selection out of all the options in the Macleay. There are plenty of other tracks and roads the more adventurous walkers might want to explore. If you do, make sure somebody knows of your plans.



Morning tea break, Maria River walk (CS)

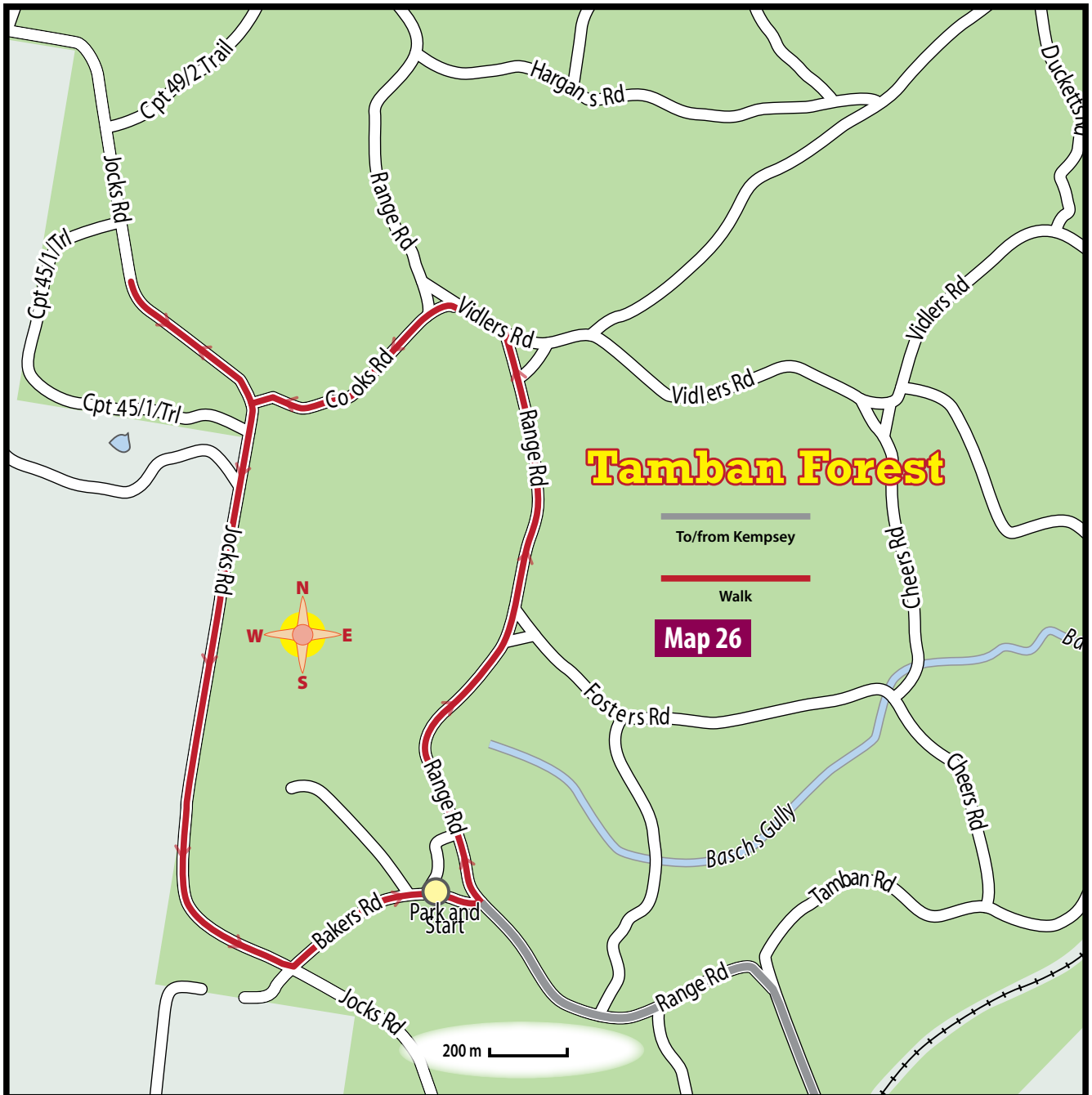




Kookaburras. (CS)



Forest Drive road sign. (CS)



*I would like to walk like this forever,
if I only could.*

– Ludwig Leichhardt

Tamban Forest

Distance from Kempsey 17km, 5-6km — Easy

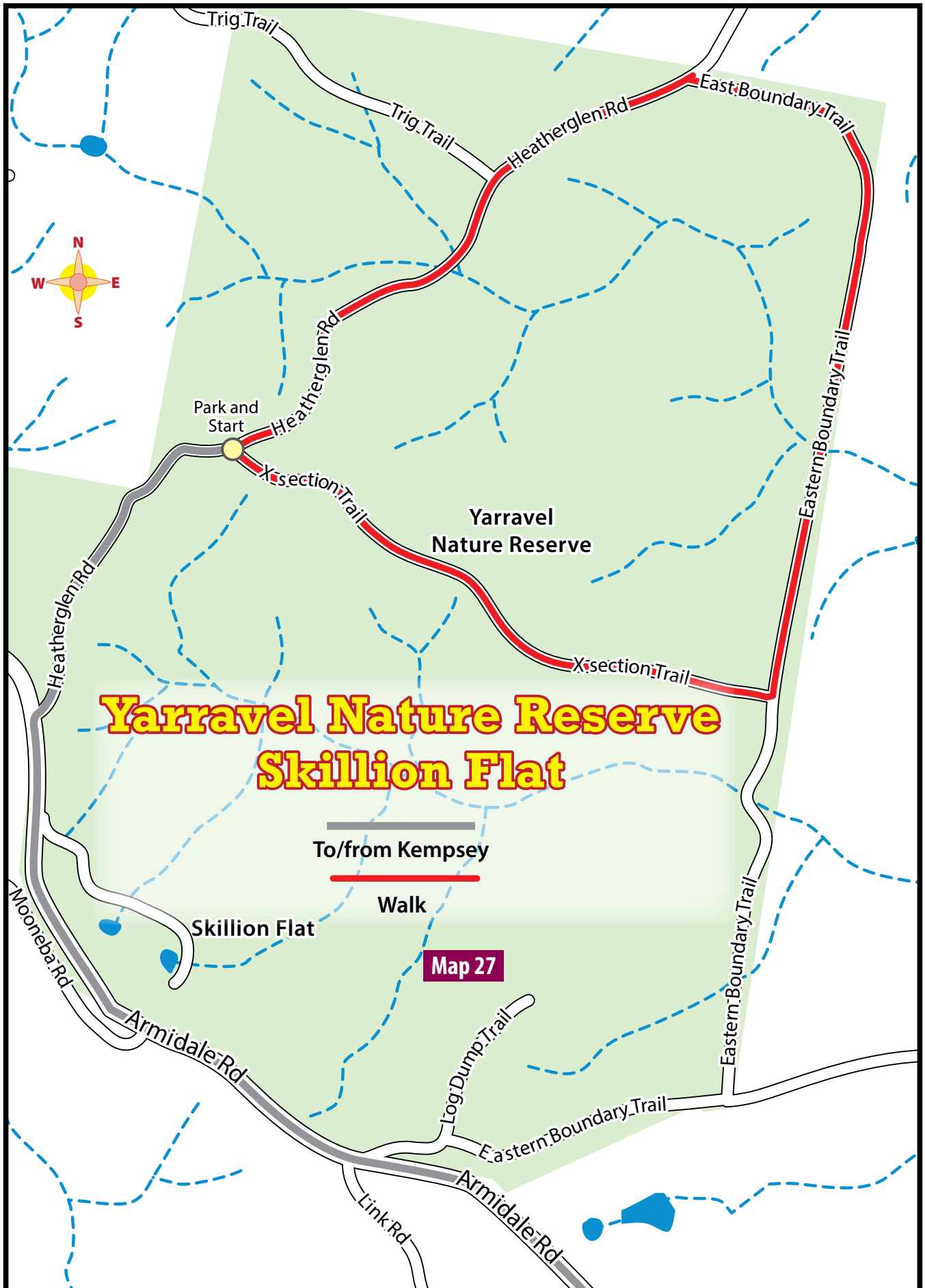
THIS is a pleasant walk through State Forest on maintained forestry roads. Drive from Kempsey via Frederickton to Tamban Forest in Collombatti.

Park at the corner of Range Road and Bakers Road. Walk in an anti-clockwise circuit about 1.7km along Range Road. Turn left into Cooks Road, walk 600m. Turn left again and walk 1.7km along Jocks Road. Left once more and walk 500m on Bakers Road back to the start.

At the corner of Cooks Road and Jocks Road, there is a possible short extension of less than 1km by turning right on Jocks Road to a lovely creek and return to the corner of Cooks Road.



U3A tree: Well worn, has seen hard times, but going strong. (CS)



Yarravel Nature Reserve, Skillion Flat

4 km, Easy

Yarravel Nature Reserve is off Armidale Road, a 15 km, 15 min drive from Kempsey. It was created in 1969 and covers an area of 318ha. The vegetation of the reserve is mostly regrowth sclerophyll forest, dominated by a range of eucalypts.

One threatened plant species has been recorded within the reserve and twelve threatened animal species have been recorded in or near the reserve. Some sections are invaded by lantana.

The walk is a circuit of under 5km from Heatherglenn Road, Eastern Boundary Trail, X-Section Trail returning to Heatherglenn Road. There are minor ups and downs, nothing steep. The optional addition of 3km to the Trig Point has a rather steep section.

Getting there: On Armidale Road, about 30m past the Skillion flat locality sign, turn right into Heatherglenn Road. Drive approx 1km to the corner of X-Section Trail. There is space for parking.

The walk: Walk along Heatherglenn Road for about 1km where it ends at the gate of a private property. Turn right on the narrow Eastern Boundary Trail leading along the fence and follow it for about 1.5km to the creek. The first section can be overgrown with high grass and lantana.

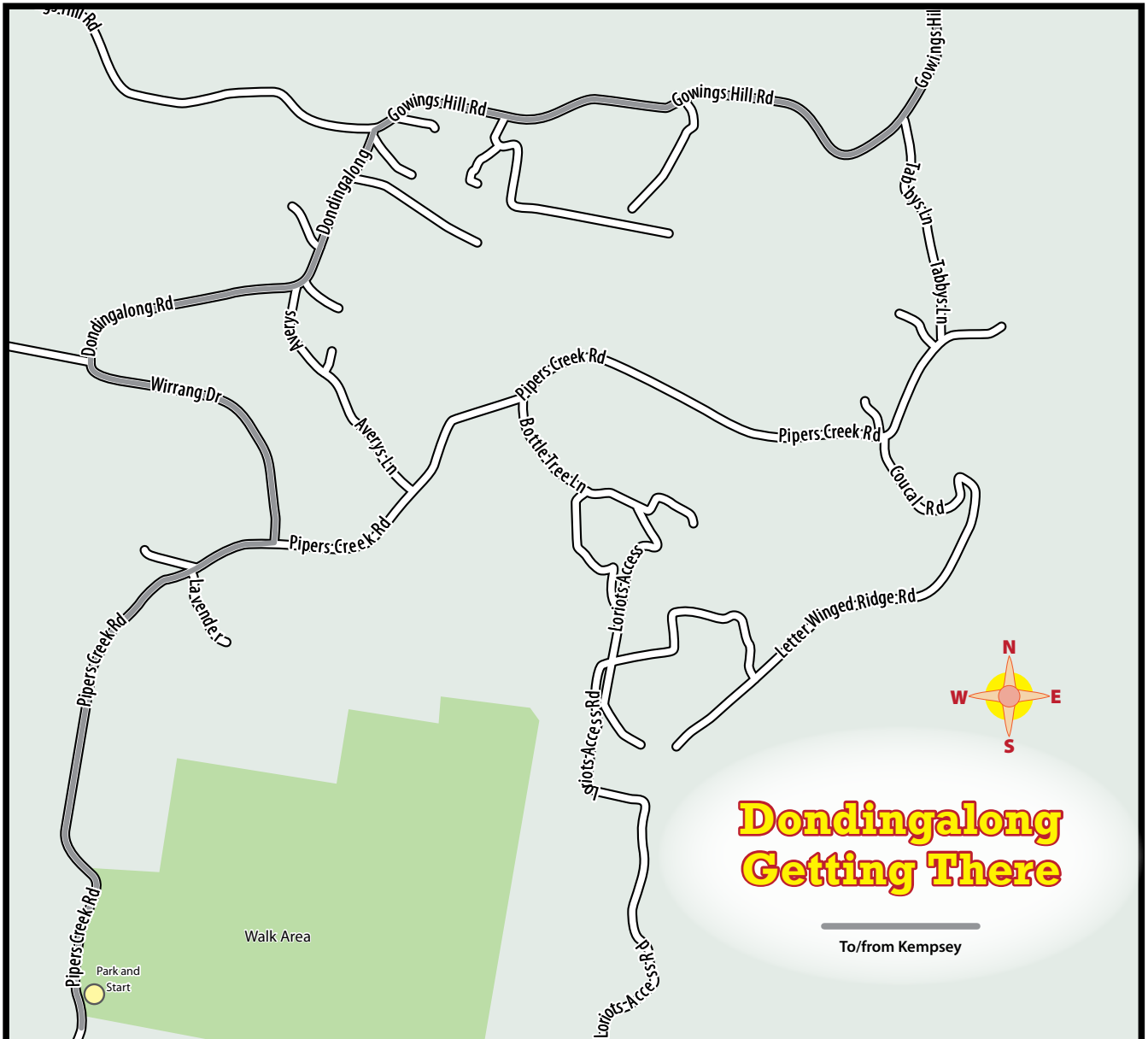
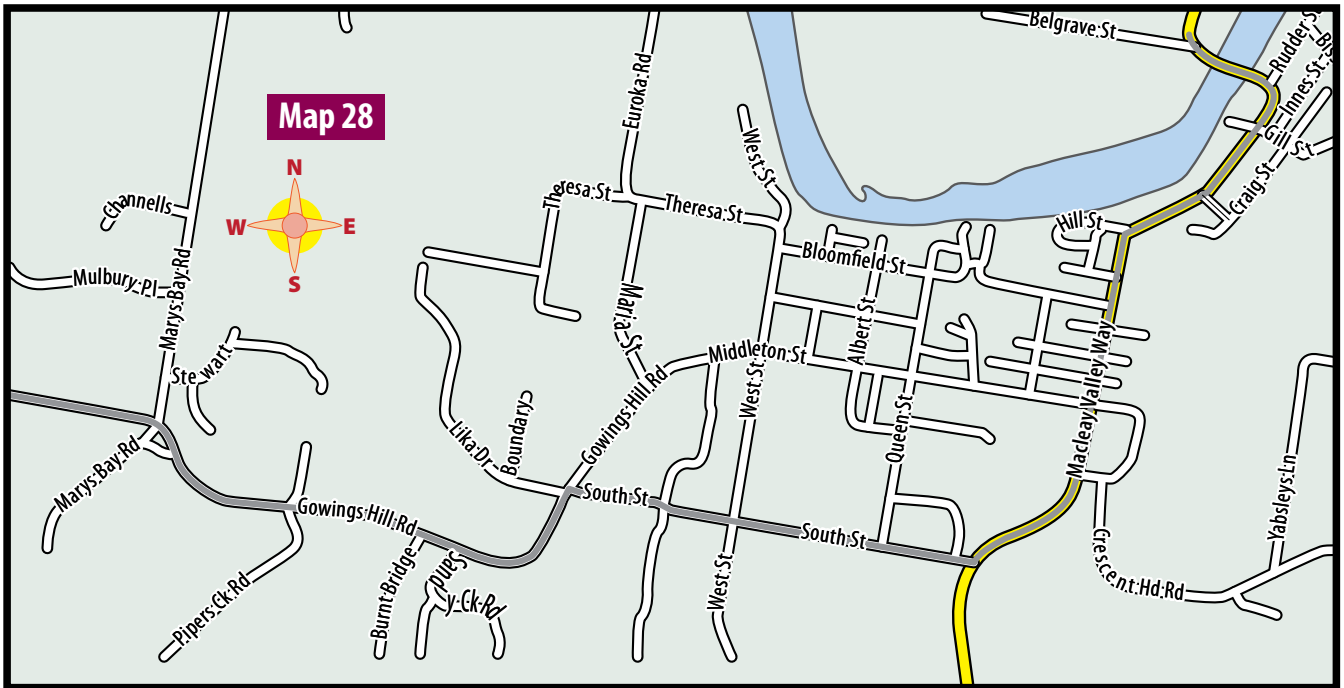
There is a pleasant spot for a rest near a creek. However, this is also a spot where a change in the weather is most noticeable. The area can be covered in lovely maiden hair fern or be dry and dull. After heavy rain, the creek might be difficult to cross.

On the other side of the creek, leading slightly to the left and uphill, the track is well defined. Follow it to an intersection where you turn right onto the curiously named X-Section Trail leading back to the parking area at Heatherglenn Road.

An optional addition to this walk is a 3km return side track to the Trig Point. There are remnants of the trig point, but, despite the elevated location, no views to the surrounding area.



At the creek crossing (CS)



Dondingalong Forest Walk

Distance from Kempsey 20km, 7.5km — Easy

Technically, this is a walk in Maria River State Forest, an area described in the next section on page 83.

However, we call it the Dondingalong Walk, because that's the name of the locality, it is nowhere near the Maria River, one has to take a different route to get there and, not least, who doesn't enjoy saying "Dondingalong". Try it! It could be used to describe a light-footed style of walking.

Getting there: *see maps opposite*

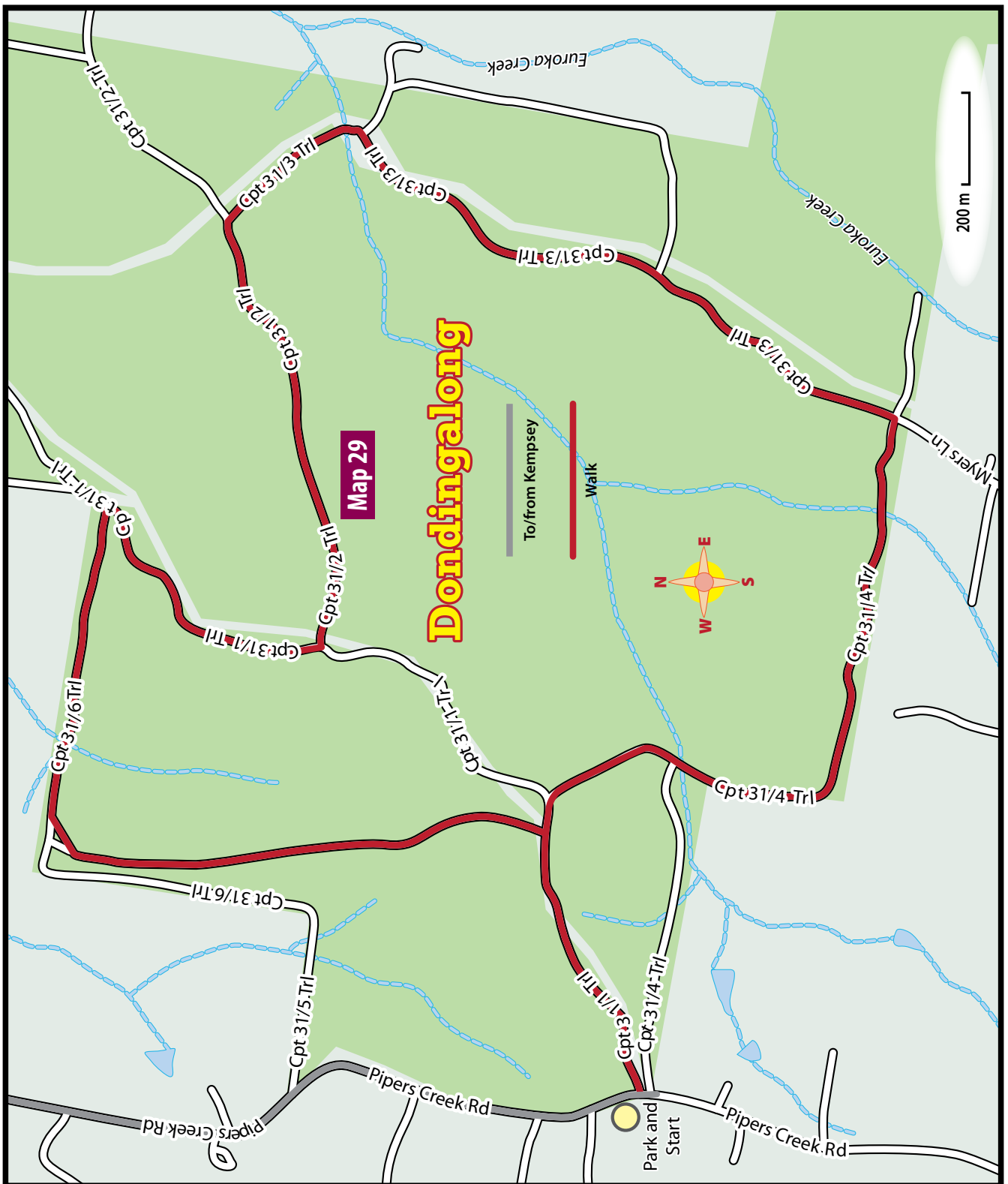
From Kempsey PO drive over the traffic bridge. After 3km turn right into South Street. Stay on South Street, which is later named Gowings Hill Road, for nearly 11km, then turn left into Dondingalong Road. 2km on, turn left into Wirang Drive which ends at a T-section. Turn right into Pipers Creek Road and follow it for approximately 3 km.

Where you see a power line over the road, there is a Maria River State Forest sign on the left. The adjacent property number is 1025.

Here you can park and start walking on the numbered trails. All of them are quite well maintained. Not all the trails are signposted. On first glance, it looks complicated, but it's not really difficult if you follow the instructions carefully.



Cicada (CS)



*Me thinks that the moment my legs begin to move,
my thoughts begin to flow.*

— Henry David Thoreau

THE WALK...

Follow West End Road for 1.1km to an intersection where a bike track starts, leading straight ahead. Turn left, staying on the road. After about 800m you'll reach Gate Road.

At the fork, turn left.

Follow this unnamed trail for 1.2km to the T section.

Turn right at Cpt 31/6 trail. Walk 700m to the T section.

Turn right at Cpt 31/1 trail and walk 700m.

Turn left at Cpt 31/2 trail, walk 1km.

Turn right at Cpt 31/3 and walk a total of 1.8km. There are two roads branching off on the left. Ignore them.

At the junction where Cpt 31/3 trail leads into Myers Lane, turn right at Cpt 31/4 trail.

Follow Cpt 31/4 trail for 2.2km, veering right at the fork, back to Cpt 31/1.

Turn left. From here it's about 600m to the cars.

Along the trail, you might find cut logs which are very inviting for a rest.

As you can see on the map, there are other trails you might like to explore.

Walking: The most ancient exercise and still
the best modern exercise. — Carrie Latet

- Walking burns calories
- Walking strengthens the heart
- Walking can help lower your blood sugar
- Walking eases joint pain
- Walking boosts immune function
- Walking boosts your energy
- Walking improves your mood
- Walking tones your legs
- Walking extends your life
- Walking improves creative thinking



Fitness professional Jolynn Baca Jaekel says about walking: "Anyone can do it at any age and any fitness level. Plus it is good for your heart, your head and your wallet."

West End Circuit

West End Road — Gate Road — Grass Tree Road

5.5km — Easy

THIS is another easy walk in the bush just south of town. It can be done in conjunction with the mountain bike trails.

The Macleay Valley Mountain Bikers have established more than 20km of Kalateenee Mountain Bike Trails. The trailhead is located at Kempsey Golf Club approximately 3.4km from the centre of Kempsey. Detailed maps are displayed at several points.

While the mountain bikers welcome walkers on the trails, be aware of bike riders – especially on weekends.

The walk we tested and recommend starts a little further south and mainly follows State Forest Roads. It incorporates a short section of the bike trails.

Go south on Macleay Valley Way to the first roundabout. Take West End Road at the back of the wrecker's yard. Park just past the wrecker's. Admittedly, this is not the prettiest parking spot, but you quickly leave it behind.

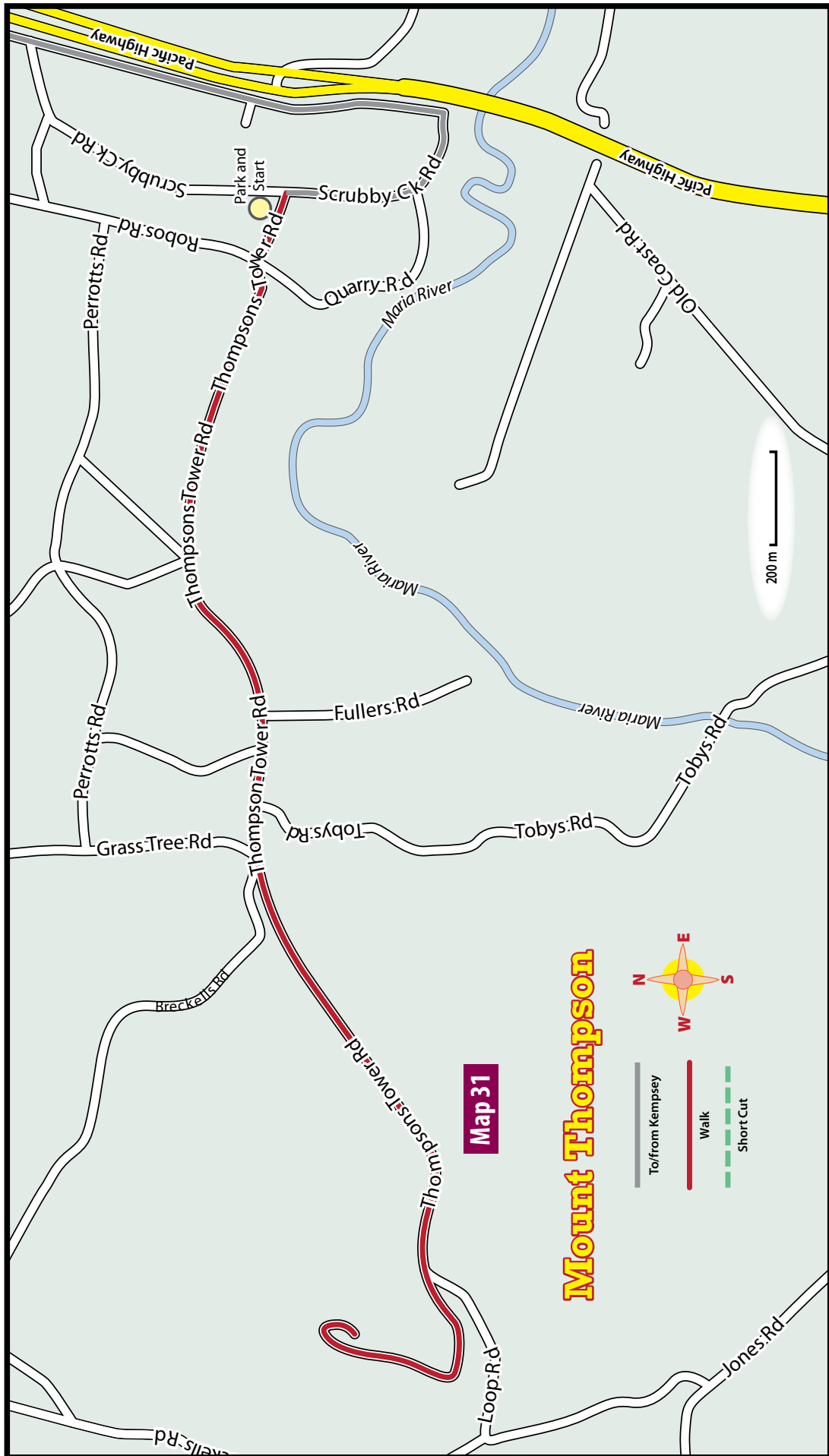
THE WALK...

Follow West End Road for 1.1.km to an intersection where a bike track leads straight ahead. Take the bike track and follow it for about 800m to Gate Road.

Turn left into Gate Road. Walk 1.5km. At an intersection, the road straight ahead as well as the fork to the left are both called Grass Tree Road. Take the left. Follow it for about 2km and you reach the roundabout. Keep left to get back to the car.



A comfortable log, morning tea and good company. What more could one want on a forest walk? (CS)



Mount Thompson

(on some maps also spelled Thomsons)

7km — Easy to Moderate

TRUE, you can drive all the way, but walking to the top of Mount Thompson rewards you with a well deserved view.

Parking at Scrubby Creek Road/Thompson Tower Road behind the Pet Boarding Kennels.

How to get there — see details on Map 32: Go south to the Pacific Highway access. At the first roundabout follow the signs to Scrubby Creek Road and Australian Pet Boarding. Drive past the kennels to the very end, then go right and follow Scrubby Creek Road to the Thompson Tower Road turnoff.

Park at Scrubby Creek Road/Thompson Tower Road alongside the back fence of the Pet Boarding Kennels. If a shorter walk is preferred, there are several other parking options along Thompson's Tower Road.

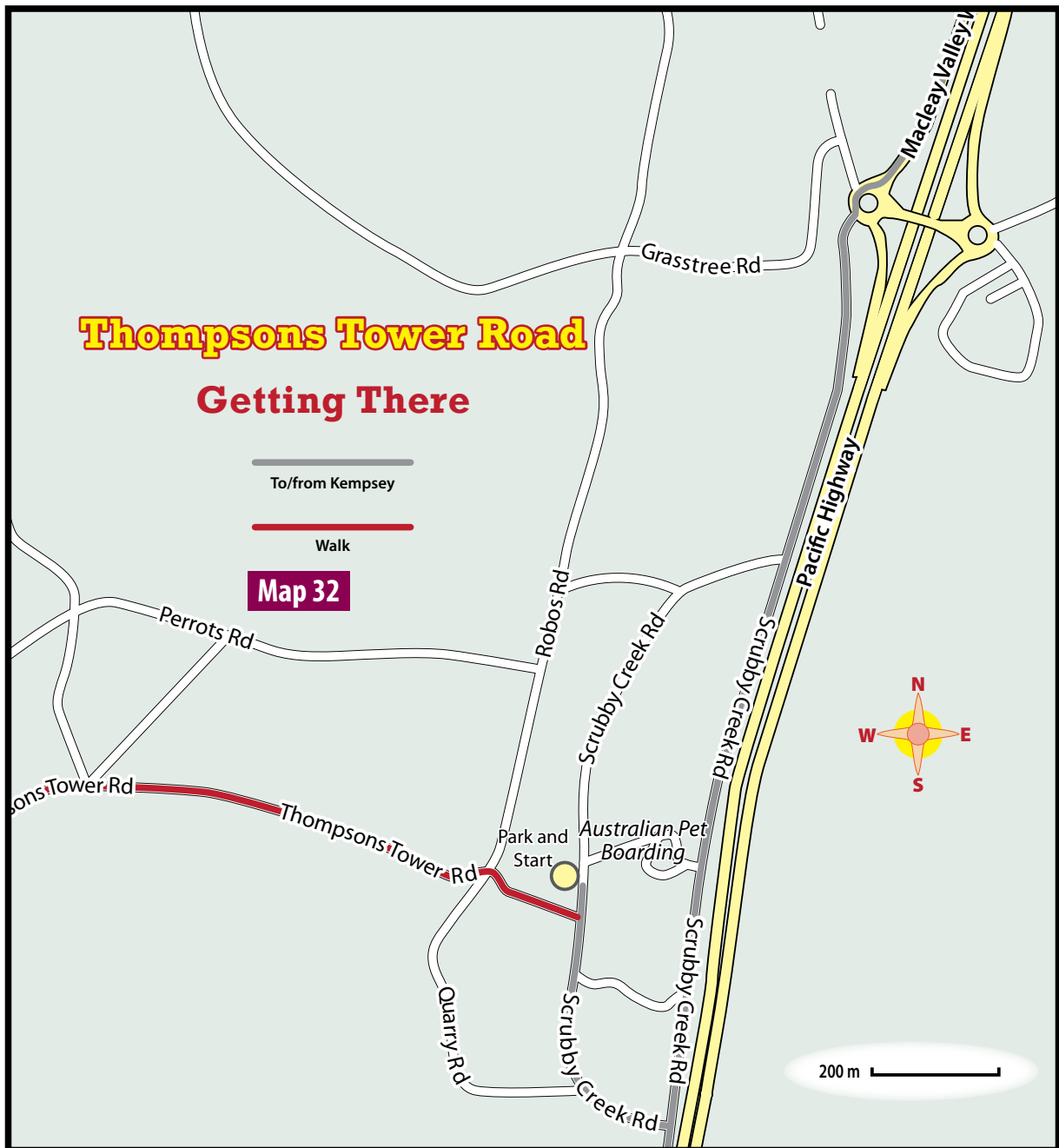
Walk along Thompson Tower Road. From the Pet Boarding Kennels it is a total of 3.4km to the top of Mt Thompson. After about 2.9km you come to a fork in the road. Keep right. There is a moderate rise for the last 500m.

Return the same way.

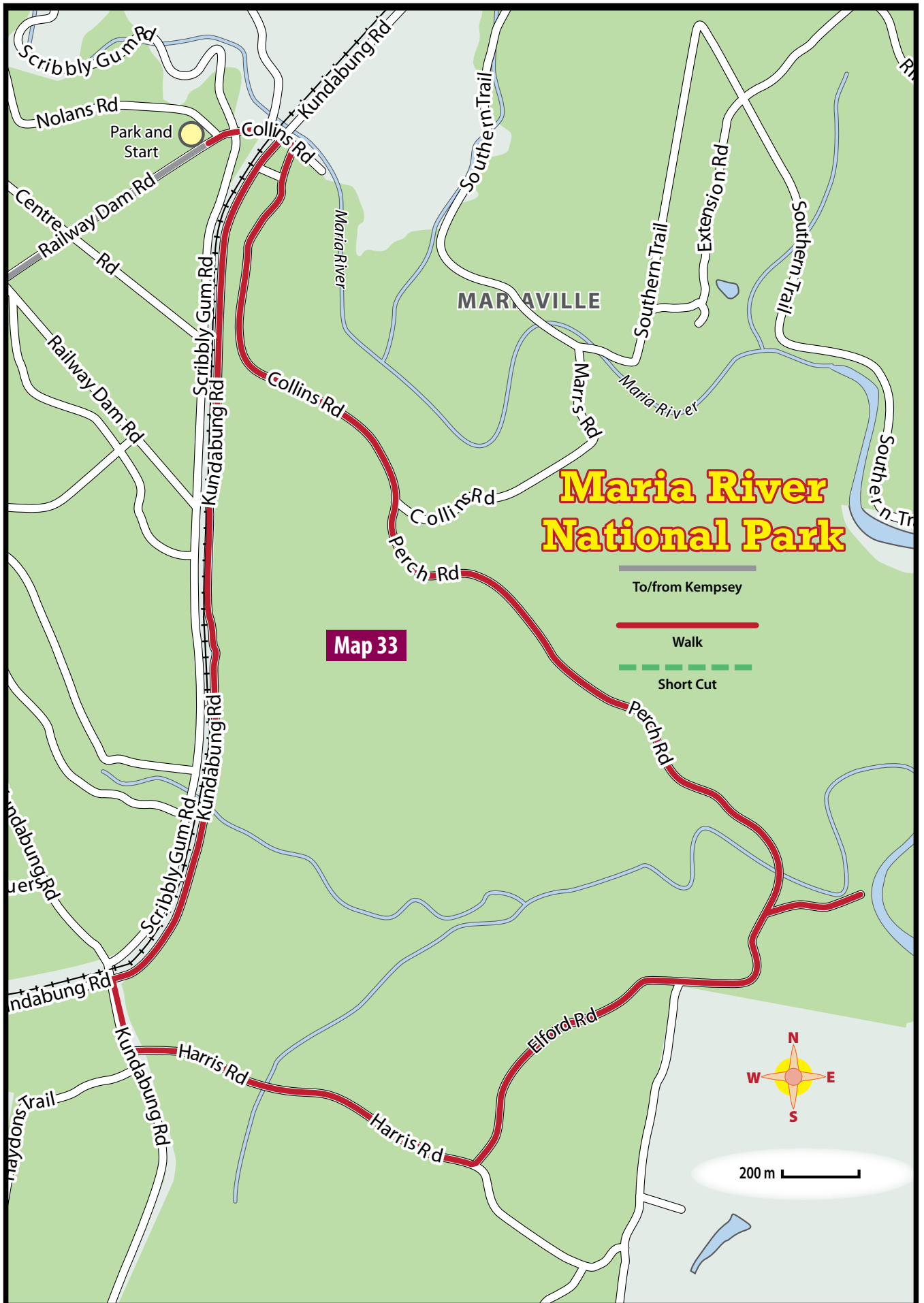
If a shorter walk is preferred, there are several parking options along Thompson Tower Road.



Mt Thompson, not too high, but with a lovely view. (CS)



Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. – Soren Kierkegaard



Maria National Park

Walk distance approx 9.5 km - easy

This is not a well known National Park. It is a good area to stride out, admire the many mature grass trees and rest at a nice spot at the bank of the Maria River.

The best access is on Railway Dam Road from the highway south of Kempsey leading through the State Forest plantation between the highway and the railway which has been clearfelled and will be replanted. The railway line runs along the western boundary of this section of the National Park. The roads are flat and most of them are quite shaded. The proposed walk includes a little side track to a lovely spot on Maria River.

To get there, take the M1 going South. About 2km from the Slim Dusty Interchange turn left into Railway Dam Road. Follow it, keeping left for 3.7km. Find a parking spot near the corner of Nolan Road.

Walk East under the railway and turn right on the other side.

Keep right and, going South, follow the path along the rail line for 2.5km.

At the Kundabung Road rail crossing turn left, walk about 100m. At a fork in the road turn left into Harris Road. Walk 1km.

Turn left into Elford Road.

Ignore Blackwells Road and another unnamed road on the right.

At about 1.3km, turn right and walk 250m to Maria River where you find a lovely spot by the water for a rest. With some luck there might be turtles for company.

Return to Elford Road, turn right, walk about 100m to a fork in the road.

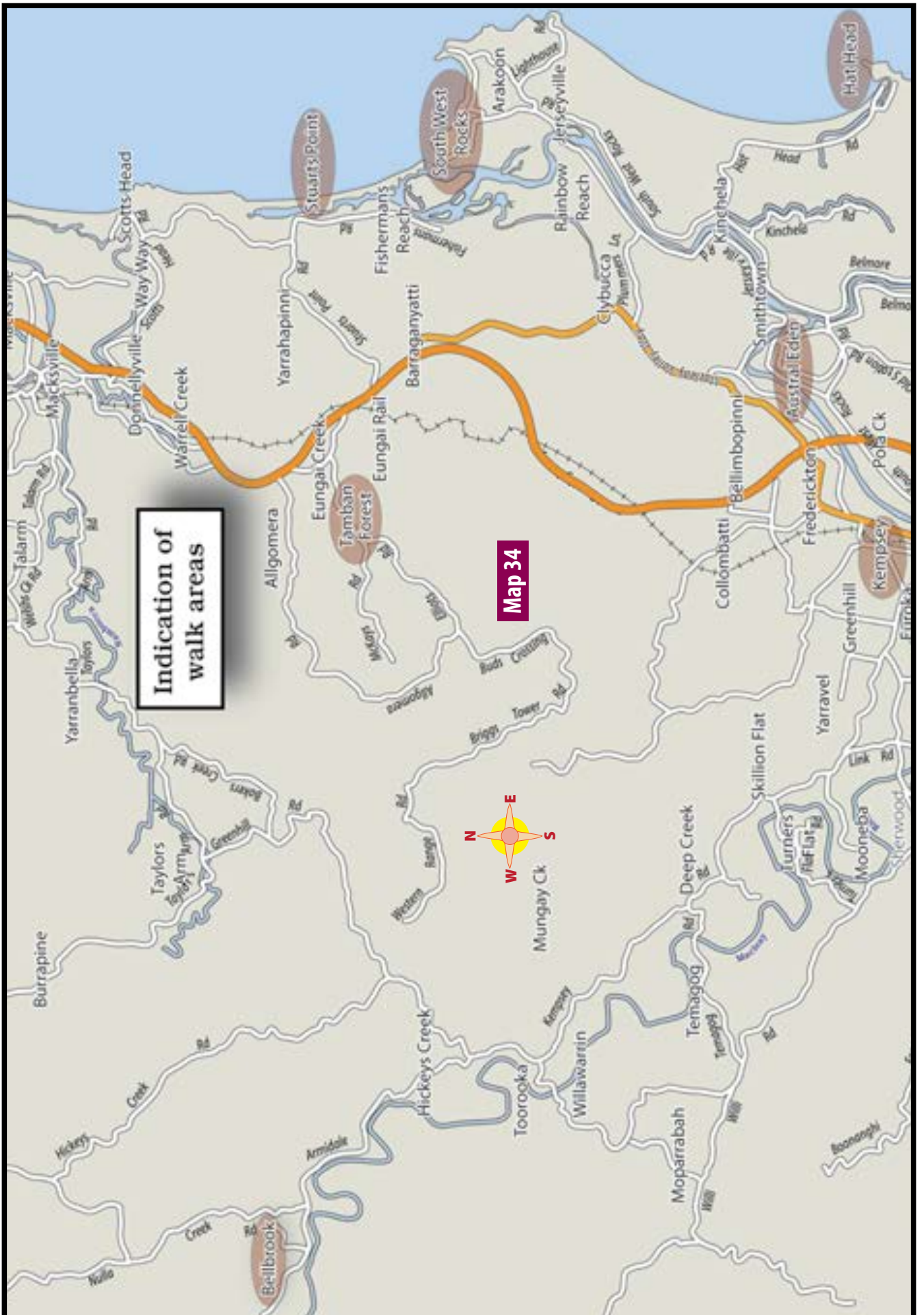
Keep left, that's Perch Road.

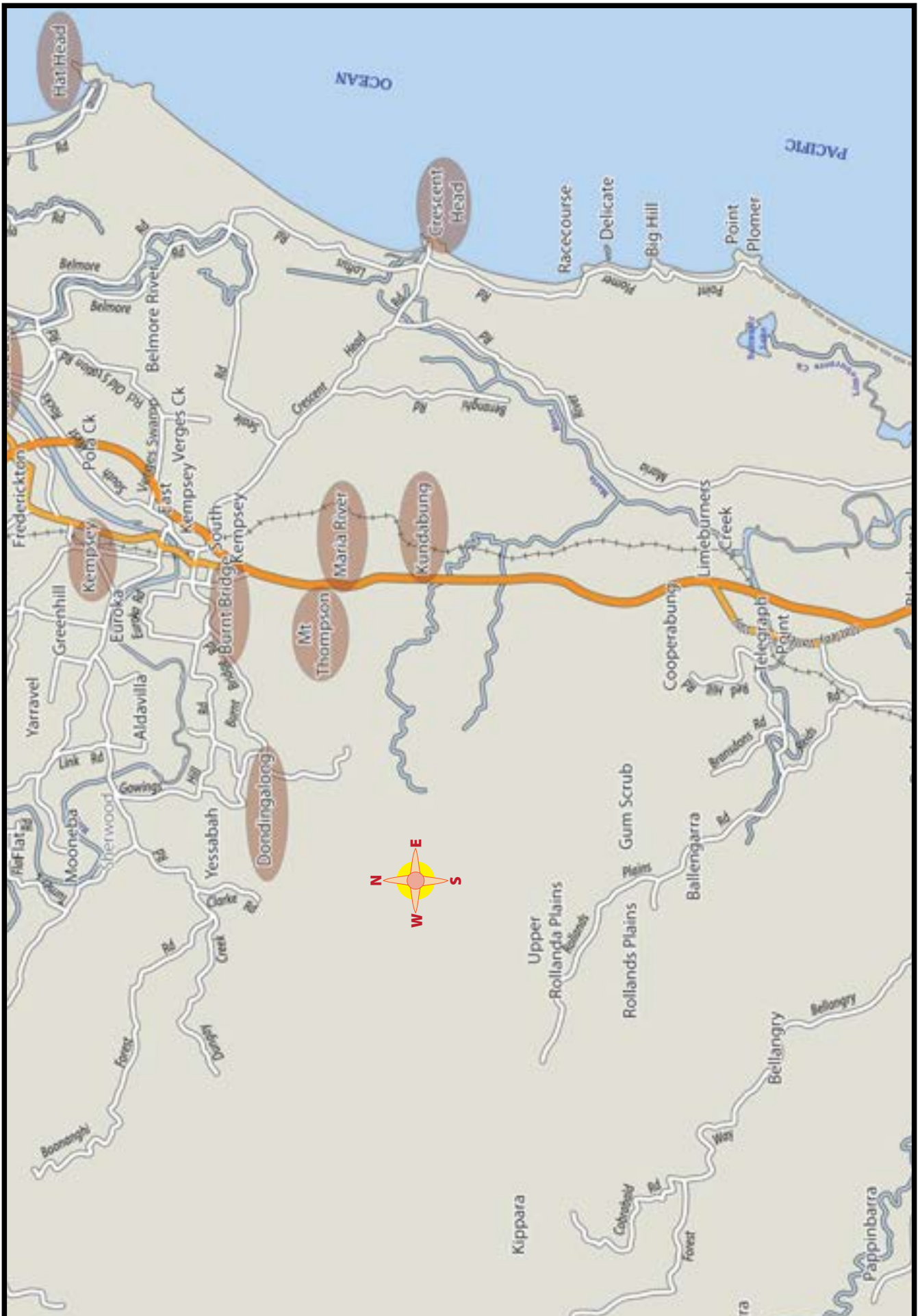
Walk 2.8km NW until you reach the railway underpass where the walk began.

Walk under the railway bridge, back to the cars.



Beauty in Nature (CS)





Some suggested reading and websites to visit

For a bit of armchair walking and motivation to get up and go out:

In Praise of Walking: The new science of how we walk and why it's good for us by Shane O'Mara, Penguin Random House 2019

A good, but incomplete version is available on

https://books.google.com.au/books/about/In_Praise_of_Walking.html?id=6MRuDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

The Art of Mindful Walking – Meditations on the Path by Adam Ford, Allen and Unwin (Crows Nest) 2011

Walking – One Step at a Time by Erling Kagge, Penguin 2019

The following three titles are available at the Kempsey Library

A Philosophy of Walking by Frederic Gros, Verso 2015

Born to Walk – The Transformative Power of a Pedestrian Act by Dan Rubinstein, ECW 2015

Perfect Motion – How Walking makes us Wiser by Jono Lineen, Ebury Press 2019

<https://macleayvalleycoast.com.au/>

<http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/publications.html>

<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/news/walk-away-from-heart-disease>

www.npwsnsw.gov.nsw.au

<https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/>

<https://npansw.org.au>