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CHINESE GARDENS  
Hard Work and Toil

Across the road (on the Mayfield Sport and Recreation Club site) was one of the Chinese Gardens which supplied Mayfield residents with vegetables. They had no machinery and watered the gardens by hand from a well. Each market gardener had a draught horse and wagon to sell the vegetables door to door.

The gardens remained up until the 1930s when development, progress and pollution forced them out of the area. Cross over at the Ingall St traffic lights to bring you to Mayfield East School.

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MAYFIELD EAST SCHOOL  
Crebert St

The first school in Mayfield, a slab and shingle hut, was built on this site, which was part of Crebert's land in the 1850s. Peter Crebert, a vine dresser from Germany, came to Mayfield in 1853. He planted vineyards and produced the first wine in Newcastle. The school was called Folly Public School. Children from the river islands (which today make up Kooragang Island) would row to Ingall Street wharf and walk up the hill to the school. How different would schooling have been 100 years ago here at this school?

In the 1920s an amateur archaeologist called D.F. Cooksey, who lived in Mayfield, discovered many Aboriginal artefacts on the banks of the Hunter River. He tried to establish a museum in Newcastle, but was unsuccessful and so sent the items to England.

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LOST ISLANDS  
A Lost Lifestyle

Look straight down Ingall St towards the industrial complex. This street used to run right down to the river at Ingall St wharf. Did you know about the lost islands? The industrial landscape of Kooragang is made up of nine small islands which used to be the home of many farming and fishing communities. Moscheto Island even had a school and a post office. Some Novocastrians remember growing up on the islands. Did you also know there used to be a beach in Mayfield?

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SHELLEY BEACH  
Buried Secret

A popular spot for swimming, rowing and picnics was Shelley Beach, where the manganese plant is now located in Tourle Street. The 2-acre recreational reserve, which included the beach, was handed over to BHP in 1942 in exchange for an area of BHP-owned land elsewhere in Mayfield.

Shelley Beach now lies buried beneath tonnes of infill. The Beach wasn't, however, handed over without considerable protest from residents and Greater Newcastle Council aldermen. In fact, the Council narrowly succeeded in approving the land transfer, voting 10 votes to 9 in favour. Head back along Crebert St and look down Arthur St and you can see the One Steel complex (former BHP site) and wind turbine. Continue down Crebert St back past San Clemente.

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TIMES & TEMPOS  
Change and Chance

Mayfield up until 1913 or so was semi-rural, which meant a slower pace of life, more in tune with natural rhythms: seasons, tides, day and night. It took a bullock team an entire day to travel from Mayfield to Newcastle. The establishment of BHP and other modern manufacturers created a different daily tempo. Changes of shift were marked by siren and whistle. Workers on their bikes, whole rivers of cyclists, would race to get to work on time. Maitland Road became increasingly busy with the arrival of private motor vehicles after WWII. The weekend became the ‘scheduled’ time for leisure.

Now let's enter Avon St which is distinctively lined with date palms just past Bella Vista.

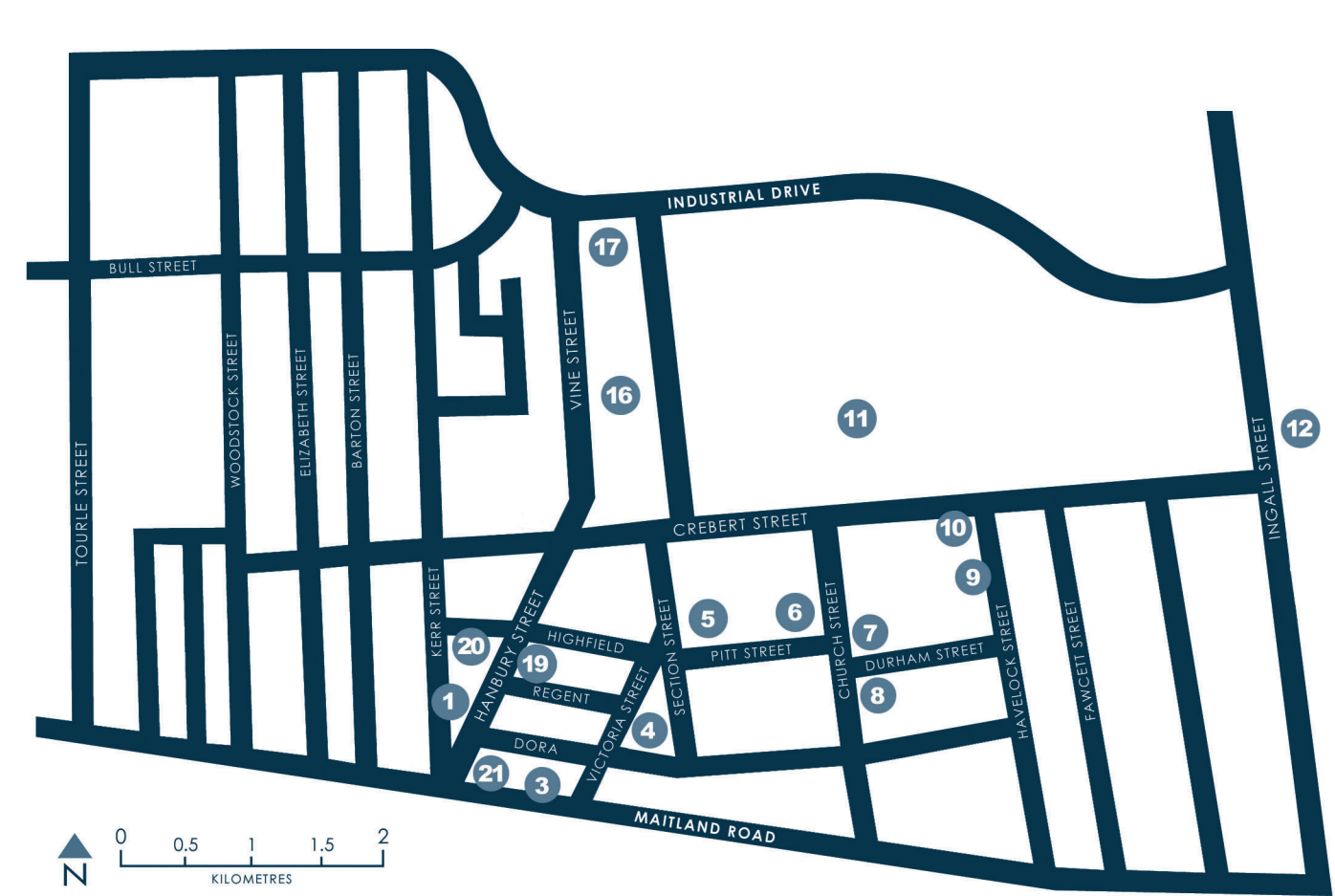
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POMMY TOWN  
Brittish Influence

We are now entering Pommy Town, a name given by locals to the area including Avon, Vine, Usk and Anthill Streets. In the 1920s Lysaghts Steel Fabricating Company imported skilled workers from Bristol and Newport in the UK to work in steel manufacturing and fabrication plants. The company even built homes for the families in this planned estate, which were stocked with food and firewood when they arrived. Imagine how different Mayfield must have been for these migrants.

When the English and Welsh families arrived the streets were still white sand, a far cry from the cobblestone streets of Britain. The sand would get into the kids' shoes.

This would not have worried the Australian kids as most did not own any shoes during the Depression.



1 THE TERMIUS

3 MAIN STREET

4 'CORIO'

5 'BURRUNDULLA'

6 ST. SWITHINS

7 ST. COLUMBANS

8 ST. ANDREWS

9 ST. DOMINICS

10 SAN CLEMENTE

11 CHINESE GARDEN

12 MAYFIELD EAST

16 POMMY TOWN

17 SIMPSON'S COTTAGE

19 WINAHRA

20 BENCLUNA

21 STAG & HUNTER HOTEL

At the bottom of the hill we reach a small park. Stop and rest awhile, taking in the large fig trees. This was once part of Folly Park, owned by Peter Crebert. Continue to the end of Avon St. Now turn left into Industrial Drive, which was once the quiet bank of Platts Channel, part of the Hunter River. A little further along is Simpson's Cottage.

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SIMPSON'S COTTAGE  
64 Industrial Drive

This is the oldest surviving dwelling in Mayfield, built in 1852. Although he did not live here this was part of Charles Simpson's estate. Simpson was the Newcastle Custom's Officer who built "Waratah House", which gave its name to the railway station and, later, the suburb. Convicts would row Simpson to work every day along the river. The Cottage was sold to Lysaghts after World War II and became first a hostel and then the Orb (Lysaghts) Chapel. The cottage is now an art gallery exhibiting indigenous art. Drop in and take a look.

Turn left and continue up Vine Street. On the ridge you can make out the roof top of Mayfield House, once owned by John Scholey who named the subdivision after his daughter Ada May or perhaps his mother, May.

At 9 Vine St you can see a modern example of a slip rail fence, once a prominent feature around the area. You can also see a grape vine. Much of the land around here, up to Crebert Street, was under grape vine and orchard, hence the name Vine Street.

Crebert's Folly Gardens, as they became known, were a popular place for people from all over Newcastle to stroll through and to 'get romantic' in the leafy setting.

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NATIVE VEGETATION  
Toorak Tranquility

Many of the slopes and ridges of Mayfield were originally covered by forest of the type in Blackbutt Reserve: a mix of spotted gum, ironbark, and grey gum.

There are still stumps of the ironbark trees that were too difficult to remove underneath some houses in Mayfield. In the sheltered gullies and along the river grew figs and even giant stinging trees, which formed dense brush that provided roosts for flying foxes. You might also be surprised to know that the waratah grew in the area, and, in fact, the species reaches its northern limit at the Hunter River. On the lower, wetter ground, thick ti-tree scrub grew, while mangroves fringed the riverbank.

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WINAHRA  
Work and Play

Continue walking up Vine Street crossing Crebert St and past the Baptist Centre. You should now be able to see the beautiful house Winahra directly in front of you. This house was built in 1890 originally by William Arnott for one of his daughters, who married one of the sons of the Winn family, who had the Winns Store in Hunter Street. If you have time, take a little walk up to 17 Highfield Street, which was built by the Hunter family, one of the shop owners in Maitland Road in the 1920s.

The very wealthy families often employed girls in their early teens as maids. Other young girls worked in 'knitting factories' which were located throughout the suburb. Boys would deliver, work on farms or even in the factories. The kind of childhood that kids today enjoy was quite different to the experiences of the kids growing up in the early 20th century in Mayfield.

Of course, people spent their spare time in different ways, determined largely by social class. The wealthy could afford large homes and gardens in which they enjoyed socialising, while for working class people, socialising was done in the streets and in friends' houses. In the late 1800s you could have visited Crystal Palace Gardens, which were located by Hanbury St not far from Waratah Rail Station. The Gardens covered 12 acres and were surrounded by a 3-metre high steel fence. The park incorporated formal gardens, paths, a small zoo and aviary, running tracks, a dancing pavilion and even a small skating rink. It was just the place to take your beloved on a romantic stroll.

Turn left into Hanbury St and across the road you can see 'Bencluna'.

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'BENCLUNA'  
120 Hanbury St

This house was built for Harriet Winn in 1903. She was the daughter of Isaac Winn who lived in Winahra. Continue down Hanbury St to Maitland Rd, ending this walk conveniently at the Stag and Hunter.

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STAG & HUNTER HOTEL  
Maitland Rd

This site was covered in ti-tree scrub up until the Tonks Hotel was built in the 1920s. This is a fine example of a pub of its era. It has a Queensland maple staircase, oak panelling, ornate plaster ceilings and an elliptical dome ceiling in the once revered dining room. Why don't you go inside and have a look at some of the old Mayfield photographs in the hotel foyer.