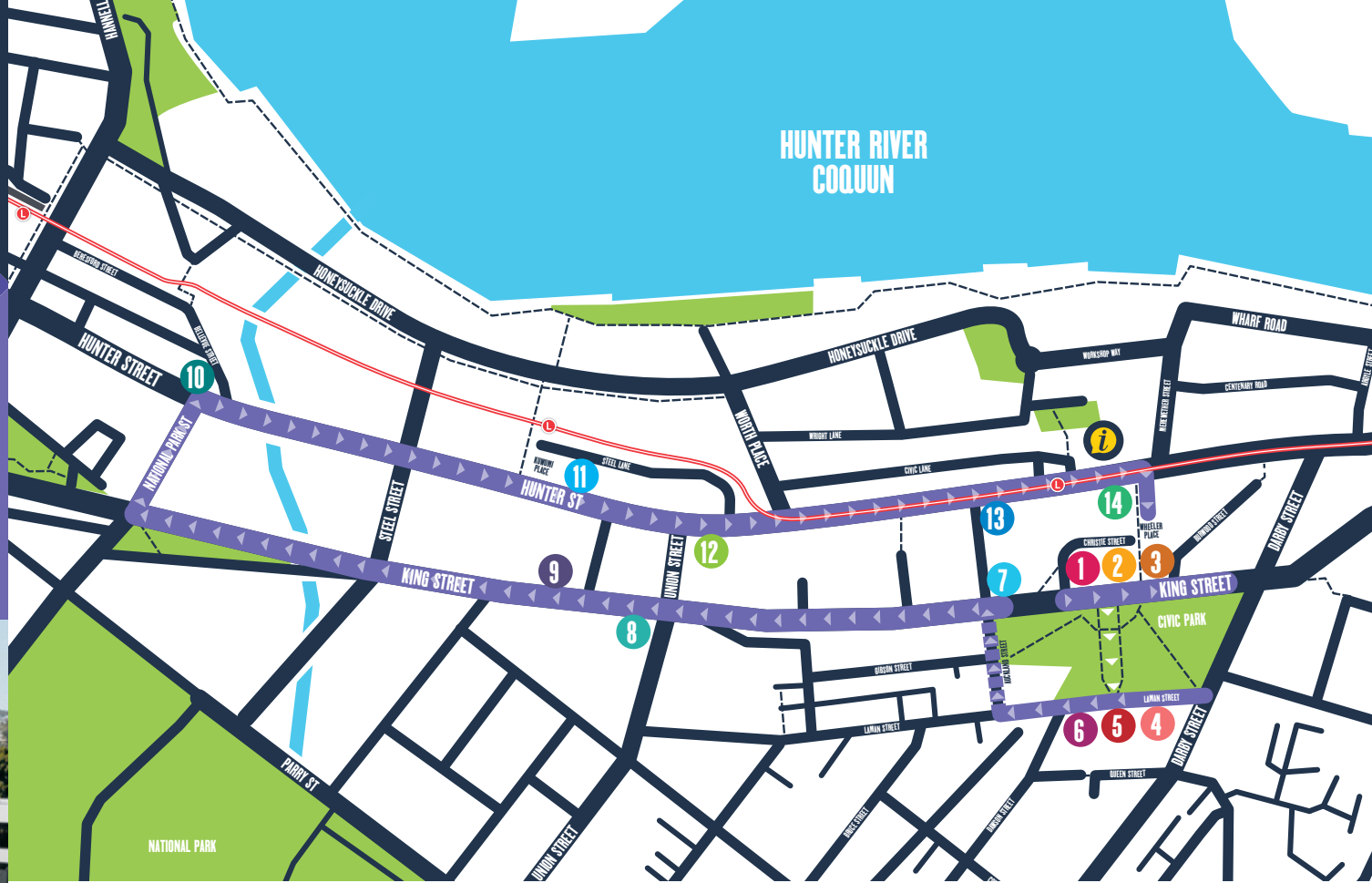


# WALKING TRAIL

Easy  
1hr 30mins / 2.2km

# NEWCASTLE ARCHITECTURE

Explore Newcastle's architectural heritage with this self-guided walking tour.



- |                                 |                              |   |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b> Newcastle City Hall    | <b>6</b> Baptist Tabernacle  | <b>11</b> Trades Hall & Newcastle Technical College |
| <b>2</b> Corm                   | <b>7</b> Nesca House         | <b>12</b> University of Newcastle (UON)             |
| <b>3</b> Crystalbrook Kingsley  | <b>8</b> NEX (Workers Club)  | <b>13</b> Steggas Emporium                          |
| <b>4</b> Newcastle Art Gallery  | <b>9</b> Miss Porter's House | <b>14</b> Civic Theatre                             |
| <b>5</b> Newcastle War Memorial | <b>10</b> Bank Corner        | <b>i</b> Newcastle Visitor Information Centre       |
- Walkability:** Moderate–steep gradient

# NEWCASTLE

SEEK OFF BEAT

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Newcastle Acknowledges its Local Government Area (LGA) sits within the Country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We Acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient relationships. The City of Newcastle Acknowledges the custodianship of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples and the care and stewardship they have performed in this place since time immemorial.

## 1 NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Known for its golden Sydney sandstone façade, towering three-metre diameter clock and grand Roman Doric and Ionic columns, City Hall is a Newcastle landmark.

The three-storey State Heritage-listed building, designed by acclaimed architect Henry Eli White, was completed in 1929 and today represents a fine example of Inter-War Academic Classical style.

The building features an 844-seat concert hall, dining room and servery, as well as office and function spaces. It was home to City of Newcastle until 1977 when staff moved to the purpose-built City Administration Centre (next door), known as the Roundhouse. City Hall continued to house the Council Chambers and the Lord Mayor's office until their relocation in 2020 to City of Newcastle's new administrative centre in Newcastle West.

**🔍 Did you know?** During World War II, Newcastle City Hall was the nerve centre for the civilian response to an attack on the city, and hosted free concerts for international and local troops. Years later a war memorial was erected opposite. Check out the view from the top of the Civic Park steps and enjoy the symmetry of the black granite cenotaph and the City Hall clock tower.

Newcastle City Hall



## 2 CORM

Look to the right of Newcastle City Hall and you'll find a permanent tribute to the landmark's 50th anniversary – a 1.5m tall bronze sculpture created by Newcastle-trained sculptor Marilyn McGrath.

Now a minor landmark in its own right – with a timber bench surrounding it to encourage passers-by to stop and rest their feet – the sculpture was commissioned by BHP Pty Ltd to celebrate the golden jubilee of Newcastle City Hall, celebrated in December 1979.

Entitled "Corm" and inspired by the fleshy stem found in plants, the organic sculpture was designed to provide a link between the constructed environment and nature.

**🔍 Did you know?** The sculpture provides a second enduring link between City Hall and the iconic Newcastle steel manufacturer, with countless tons of BHP steel used to reinforce City Hall's foundations during construction.

# NEWCASTLE ARCHITECTURE WALKING TRAIL

**The architecture of Newcastle showcases a rich diversity of styles that reflect the city's prosperity and growth throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.**

On this tour you'll explore buildings that have acted as cultural, political and economic icons for the people of Newcastle, and discover designs created by architects of local, national and international significance.

The walking tour begins at **Newcastle City Hall**, which has been at the centre of Newcastle's cultural and political life since it was completed in 1929, and ends after coming almost full circle to the nearby **Civic Theatre**, Newcastle's premier live theatre venue and one of the last great remaining examples of 'picture palace' architecture in the state.

**Newcastle Visitor Information Centre**  
430 Hunter Street, Newcastle NSW 2300  
Open 7 days  
**Phone** (02) 4974 2109  
**Email** [visitorinformation@ncc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:visitorinformation@ncc.nsw.gov.au)

 [visitnewcastle.com.au](http://visitnewcastle.com.au)

 [facebook.com/visitnewcastle](https://www.facebook.com/visitnewcastle)

 [@citynewcastle.au](https://www.instagram.com/citynewcastle)



## 3 CRYSTALBROOK KINGSLEY

Look up after admiring the Corm and you won't be able to miss the brutalist architecture that dominates the city skyline in the Civic Precinct. Colloquially renamed everything from the Roundhouse to the Champagne Cork and the Wedding Cake, the former City Administration Centre was constructed in 1977 to house City of Newcastle's growing workforce, which could no longer be accommodated by City Hall.

The distinctive circular building was designed by architects Romberg and Boyd in association with Newcastle practice Wilson and Suters. Swiss-trained architect Frederick Romberg was also the foundation Professor of Architecture at the University of Newcastle.

The iconic landmark has been reimaged into the city's first five star hotel - Crystalbrook Kingsley. Their rooftop bar Rombergs honours the original architect and leading figure in Modernism, and also is a great place for a drink with unparalleled views.

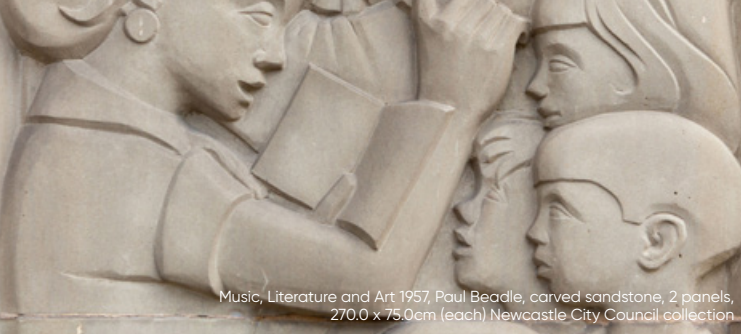
**⚠️ Keep an eye out:** Walking around the City you might have noticed the impressive Christ Church Cathedral that dominates the city skyline. Christ Church Cathedral had its beginning back in 1804 and by 1812 legend has it that a slab hut was on the site, but what you see today was not complete until 1983. At 72.5 metres long, 26.5 metres wide, 36.5 metres high and 77.5 metres above sea level, it's no wonder you can see this building from almost anywhere in the city! The Cathedral is located on Church Street and is well worth the uphill walk to take a closer look.

## 4 NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY (Currently closed)

Head south through the green surrounds of Civic Park and you'll find another fine example of the Brutalist aesthetic that flourished after the Second World War. The 11m-high egg-in-a-nest sculpture Black Totem II, created by renowned artist Brett Whiteley, provides a dramatic addition to the gallery forecourt.

Newcastle Art Gallery was the first purpose built regional art gallery in Australia. It was officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Friday 11 March 1977.

**Newcastle Art Gallery is closed for major renovations until mid 2024.**



Music, Literature and Art 1957, Paul Beadle, carved sandstone, 2 panels, 270.0 x 75.0cm (each) Newcastle City Council collection

## 5 NEWCASTLE WAR MEMORIAL CULTURAL CENTRE

Art also adorns the exterior of the adjacent building, with two sandstone panels carved by artist Paul Beadle in 1957 flanking the entrance of the Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre.

The heavily stylised relief sculptures portray a series of figures involved in **music, literature and art** – a fitting tribute considering the building’s original purpose was to house the city’s public library, art gallery and conservatorium of music.

English-born Beadle was the head of the Art School at Newcastle Technical College from 1951 until 1957, before migrating to New Zealand in 1961.

**Did you know?** Beadle left a lasting impression on the Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre in more ways than one – his relief sculptures include a self-portrait in the top right-hand side of the entry, which shows him carving a male bust.



Baptist Tabernacle, Laman St, Newcastle  
Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection 163 000108

## 6 BAPTIST TABERNACLE

Walk about 30m west and step back in time to the late 19th century as you take in the elaborately painted plaster neoclassical Corinthian façade of the Baptist Tabernacle.

Designed by Frederick Menkens, one of Newcastle’s most prominent architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the building’s foundation stones were laid on Christmas day in 1889, before being completed and opened in 1890.

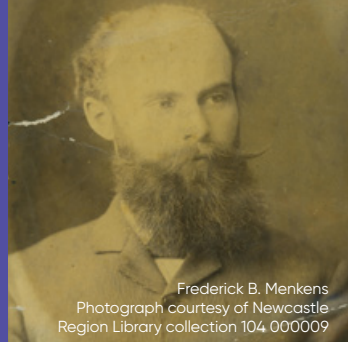
**Did you know?** The Baptist Tabernacle was threatened with compulsory demolition during planning for the neighbouring Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre in the 1940s.

# MENKENS

Hailing from Germany, renowned architect Frederick B. Menkens had a huge impact on the look and character of Newcastle in the late 19th century.

The creative architect is responsible for designing more than 100 buildings in the city and the Hunter. There’s no better illustration of Menkens’ diversity of style than the 50m stretch of Laman Street where he designed two very different places of worship in 1889.

The Baptist Tabernacle is a solidly imposing rendered structure inspired by the Metropolitan Tabernacle built in London in 1861.



Frederick B. Menkens  
Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection 104 000009

Turn around to see the St Andrews Presbyterian Church, perched on the corner of Auckland Street. Menkens won a competition to design this building, creating a 15th century gothic-style church built using yellow patent pressed brick with Pymont freestone details. Its interior is known for its finely detailed roof trusses and ceiling linings.



Nesca House

## 7 NESCA HOUSE

Head back down the hill along Auckland Street and take in the Art Deco and European Modernist beauty of NESCA House, the former home of the Newcastle Electricity Supply Council Administration.

City of Newcastle began to generate electricity for street lighting in 1890. By 1937 it was providing more than 87 million kilowatt hours of power and had outgrown its office space in City Hall.

Used by the University of Newcastle since 1995 and renamed ‘University House’, it now offers an architectural contrast to the university’s adjacent NuSpace building, which was opened in 2017. A three-storey glass walkway creates a symbolic and physical link between the heritage listed architecture and its ultra-modern counterpart.

**Did you know?** While a traditional sandstone façade was used to complement the nearby City Hall, NESCA House aimed for a more modern style in fitting with the “relatively novel” new concept of electricity.

## 8 NEX (NEWCASTLE WORKERS CLUB)

Head west along King Street for about 400m and you’ll find the contemporary industrial chic of Wests City (NEX).

While its architecture is unmistakably modern with a mixture of timber, glass and concrete-look tile elements, the site’s heritage value lies in its legacy as one of the most prominent political and social hubs in Newcastle, and the location of one of the city’s greatest tragedies.

The Newcastle Trades Hall Council Workers Club, otherwise known as the Red Inn and The Newcastle Workers Club, opened on this site on 8 October 1948. During the 1950s and 60s the club played an important role in the local Labor movement, and acted as a platform for organising and staging community events.

The history of the Workers Club took a devastating turn on 28 December 1989 when the city was rocked by an earthquake that caused the main floor of the building to collapse, killing nine people.

**Did you know?** The building was damaged beyond repair and was later demolished, with the new Workers Club opened in 1992 by Prime Minister Paul Keating.

## 9 MISS PORTER’S HOUSE

Walk across to the northern side of King Street to step back in time to the Edwardian era of architecture. Nestled amongst car parks and commercial buildings, ‘Miss Porter’s House’ is a distinctive freestanding terrace built in 1909 by Herbert Porter.

From the outside you can admire the building’s stretcher bond brick, corrugated iron hipped roof and first floor balcony with cast iron balustrade, while on the second Sunday of each month from February to December you can step inside to experience a unique living snapshot of pre-1950s life in Newcastle.

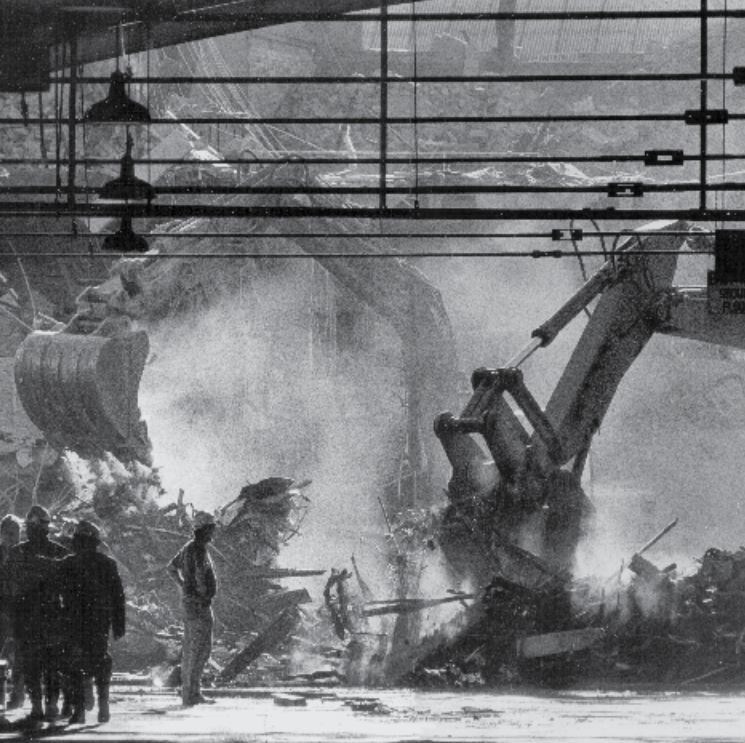
**Did you know?** Bequeathed to the National Trust of Australia in 1997, the heritage-listed property retains Edwardian & 1940s period furnishings, unique stencilled ceilings and personal items of the Porter family.

## 10 BANK CORNER

Continue to the outer western boundary of this walk and you’ll find a distinctive, Art Deco-influenced building hugging the intersection of Hunter and Bellevue streets.

A landmark site named for what occupied the unusually-shaped block for more than 100 years, the current building on ‘Bank Corner’ was constructed in 1940. Featuring smooth and curvaceous lines, it has been described as a simple, modernised version of the Classical Traditional, but you can also see clear Art Deco elements in the detailed and decorative façade.

**Did you know?** The upper brickwork still contains faintly visible references to its original use as a Bank of New South Wales branch.



Demolition of the Workers Club, December 1989. Courtesy of the Newcastle Herald

## NEWCASTLE EARTHQUAKE

The Earthquake that struck Newcastle at 10.27am on Thursday, 28 December 1989 was one of the most serious natural disasters in Australia's history.

Registering 5.6 on the Richter scale, the earthquake claimed a total of 13 lives. In addition to the nine people killed at the Newcastle Workers Club, three people were killed in Beaumont Street, Hamilton and one person died of shock. A further 160 people were hospitalised, however the death toll in what was, at the time, a dominant commercial and retail hub could have been far worse.

Thousands of people would normally have flocked to Newcastle's CBD to take

advantage of post-Christmas sales, but a public transport strike meant that fewer people than usual were in town.

While the earthquake had a significant impact on Newcastle's built environment, it also affected Novocastrians' sense of community identity, becoming a catalyst for the rebuilding, resilience and lifealtering rebirth that continues to influence the city today.

**Did you know?** The earthquake caused an estimated \$4 billion worth of damage, affecting 50,000 buildings including 40,000 homes. 300 buildings were demolished in the aftermath, with around 1,000 people left homeless.

## 11 TRADES HALL & NEWCASTLE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Walk east for around 400m and you'll discover NSW TAFE's Hunter Street campus, which features two of Newcastle's architectural highlights.

The 1895-built Trades Hall is a two-storey structure in Baroque Revival or Federation Anglo Dutch style, with an ornate façade featuring double pressed buff and red bricks, and moulded cement render. The much grander Newcastle Technical College was built a year earlier and designed by W.E. Kemp, who was also responsible for the Sydney Technical College in Ultimo.

A late Victorian neo-classical / Romanesque style with a highly decorative facade of polychrome brick and stone, the building has an asymmetrical composition, with the right side being larger than the left.

**Did you know?** A modern extension built in 1997 connects all three buildings into one educational precinct, and it is now home to the Newcastle Art School and Newcastle Film School.



## 12 UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE (UON)

The modern UON NeW Space building sits just behind Nesca House on the corner of Auckland and Hunter Streets. Designed in collaboration with Melbourne-based Lyons and the Hunter's EJE Architecture, and forming part of the university's flagship city campus, it officially opened on 25 May 2018. The campus has made a tremendous impact on our community and the ongoing reinvigoration of the city.

## 13 STEGGAS EMPORIUM

Just past the corner of Hunter and Union streets, on the southern side of the road, is a row of two-storey terrace shops that represent one of Frederick Menkens' earliest designs in Newcastle.

Built in 1886 for businessman Henry Stegga, the building was a forerunner of today's department stores, containing six separate businesses within the 40m-long façade.

The building was typical of Victorian commercial street architecture, but Menkens added a touch of flair with the addition of grand ornamental details on the upper central elevation.

**Did you know?** The building's facade still features a historic version of the 'Advance Australia Arms', which were widely used in NSW and neighbouring colonies in the 1800s. Although they never had any official status, they formed the basis for several official coats of arms, including the NSW Coat of Arms.

## 14 CIVIC THEATRE

Saving one of Newcastle's true architectural gems for last, another 400m east along Hunter Street will bring you to the final stop on the walking tour, the beautiful Civic Theatre.

Dominating Newcastle's Civic Precinct since 1929, the Georgian Revival style theatre was designed by Henry Eli White, one of the most successful theatre architects in the country, with Sydney's Capitol and State Theatres among his crowning glories.

The two-storey rendered brick façade features Italian Renaissance elements, including the elegant, repetitive semi-circular-headed windows, while the interior was designed in a dramatic Spanish Baroque style with highlights including a grand ornamental dome in the ceiling, marble staircase, terrazzo balcony and chandeliers.

**Did you know?** The theatre was used as a cinema for more than 40 years before a decline in patronage in the 1960s, blamed on the advent of television, saw it close its doors in 1973. Between 1974 and 1976 City of Newcastle transformed the building into a dedicated live theatre venue.



Inside Civic Theatre