



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation

## Custodians of North Head

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Newsletter No 4 May 2015

**Next meeting 20 May at 7pm.**

**Speaker David Jenkins - Whale Spotter**



Sydney is about to witness one of the greatest animal migrations on earth! Over 20,000 Humpback whales will travel thousands of kilometres from their summer feeding grounds, deep in the cold waters of the Southern Ocean to their breeding grounds in the warm, tropical waters of Queensland. Come and learn about this epic journey and the animals that make it with David Jenkins from Whale Spotter.

Everyone is welcome to join us at Bandicoot Heaven (Building 20) on 20 May, 2015 at 7pm.

### Native Plant Nursery

Our nursery area survived and we are fixing up our planting areas damaged by the storms.

There is always plenty to do every Tuesday or Friday. If you would like to join us just turn up any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and 12 noon.

More details from Jenny at [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au).

### *Gleichenia microphylla*



Scrambling Coral-fern grows in damp to wet ground.

### Education Room – Bandicoot Heaven

Our community education room is open 10am to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays in Building 20. Call in to have a look at our displays and our botanical cards range with many new designs. Buy four cards and get one free.

### The usefulness of white ants

**Peter Macinnis**

*You must consider a termitary as a single animal, whose organs have not yet been fused together as in a human being. Some of the termites form the mouth and digestive system; others take the place of weapons of defence like claws or horns; others form the generative organs.*

— Eugène Marais (1871 - 1936), *The Soul of the White Ant*, 1937.

*Not all social animals are social with the same degree of commitment.*

— Lewis Thomas (1913 - 1993), *The Lives of a Cell*, Penguin Books, 1978.

Termites, white ants, are evil and destructive, no use at all, right? Well, not quite. Ecologists see termites filling the same role in our bush that the big herbivores of the African plains occupy. They clean up hard-to-digest wood, converting it to soluble stuff with the assistance of assorted microbes, amazing things, but termites have other uses.



I have an environmental education address to give in Dorrigo in June, and that got me thinking about the poor quality land in the Myall Lakes National Park on the east coast of Australia. The *Macrozamia* plants in the forest are more often found associated with the Smooth-barked Apple or Rusty Gum (I wonder why it's called that?), *Angophora costata*, than with the more common Blackbutt, *Eucalyptus pilularis*.



The reason for this is at once both complex and delightfully simple.

*Angophoras* are usually gnarled, with holes or hollows where branches have broken off, and termites live in

these trees, where they hollow out the insides. Brushtail possums live in the hollows made by the termites. The possums eat the orange outside of *Macrozamia* seeds, and drop the partly eaten seeds around the base of their home trees.

The seeds germinate where they fall, which explains the distribution of *Macrozamia* plants. The roots of the *Macrozamia* 'fix' nitrogen, and so improve the sandy soil the trees grow in. The trees then grow better, providing more heartwood for the termites, who make more hollows for the possums. Everything is connected!

The old settlers had another use for termite mounds:

... it is used by the settlers in the neighbourhood as plaster, and frequently as cement for floors.

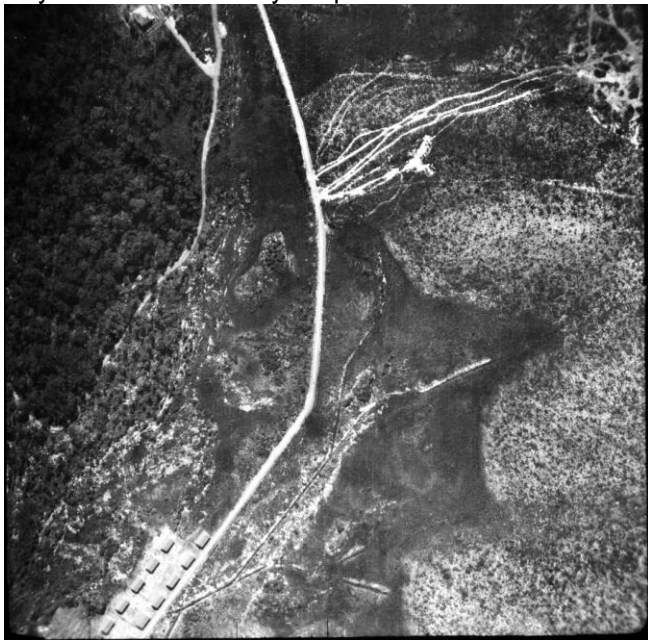
— Louise Ann Meredith (Mrs Charles Meredith), *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales*. London: John Murray, 1844, and Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1973, pages 68-69.

Please be nice to termites!

## Bandicoot Heaven then and now

Geoff Lambert

In 1929, North Head became one of the first places in Australia to be mapped by aerial photography by the Royal Australian Survey Corps.



This was, I think, preparatory to the proposal to establish North Fort in expectation of the war with Japan, which was to break out 12 years later. The photographs were taken at low altitude by a "state of the art", large-format, Eagle IV camera, which required about 25 photographs to encompass the whole of North Head. Today North Head photos by Nearmap can cover all of North Head in a single digital camera frame. The photos here show the area of our present Bandicoot Heaven and Nursery (lower right) in 1929 and 2014. In the 1929 photo, a sparse cover of ESBS can be seen on the tops of the sand dunes in the east, with denser forest-like vegetation in the swales between the dunes. This high relief was later smoothed over by the army when it built the main buildings which

scatter around the Parade Ground. The maze of tracks at the top led to the Manly night-soil depot. The two linear features underneath this maze are probably pipes or channels which collected water for the QS reservoir from where it emerged into the swales from under the sand dunes. Water still seeps in these locations (behind St Barbaras Avenue). North lies in different directions in the two photographs. The photos are two parts of a very extensive series covering the last 86 years.



## Third Cemetery

Evening News Tuesday 6 February 1883

"The Duchess of Argyle."

"The immigrant ship Duchess of Argyle, Captain Heard, from Plymouth November 16, arrived in the harbour shortly before 6 o'clock last evening. She anchored in quarantine, having sickness on board. She brings 444 passengers all told. She has a crew of 73. There are 154 male adults, of whom 95 are farm and other labourers. There are representatives of 21 trades on board. There were 12 deaths during the passage out, nine of which were from measles and the rest from scarlet fever. There was one case of measles on board when the ship arrived, and the Health Officer at once gave instructions to quarantine the ship. The immigrants were all landed at the quarantine ground, and their clothes are to-day being thoroughly washed. Dr. E. Walford, the surgeon-superintendent of the ship, reports favourably as to the general health of the passengers, who will all be brought to Sydney shortly, when the necessary health orders have been complied with."

There were two deaths at the quarantine station from scarlet fever and both were buried in the Third Cemetery. . On 9 February 1883, a little girl, May Wilding, aged four, died. On 14 February, William Knight, aged two died. There were no more deaths from the sick people from the Duchess of Argyle.