



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation

## Custodians of North Head

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### General Meeting Sat 6 February 2pm

Our next General Meeting will be on Saturday 6 February In Building 20 (Bandicoot Heaven). Our guest speaker is Katie Meyer who runs EcoXplore, <http://www.ecoxplore.com.au> which gives children an understanding and enjoyment of the bush.

### Native Plant Nursery

Work is ongoing, with planting and weed removal on the old oval. The recent rains have encouraged the spread of weeds. If you would like to join us any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and 12noon. For more details - [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au).

### Congratulations

Judy Reizes, one of our founding members, received a PSM on Australia Day. She is a founder of the Manly Environment Centre (1991) and has been honoured for her service to environmental education and conservation.

### Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

Our community education room is open 10am to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays in Building 20. We'd welcome some new volunteers to help staff Bandicoot Heaven. If interested, please contact Judy Lambert at [twsombat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:twsombat@optusnet.com.au).

### *Caustis flexuosa*



Or Old Man's Bread is an erect sedge with masses of curly branches. This one is in flower.

### Clean Up Australia Day: Help Clean Up North Head

As Clean Up day rolls around again on 6 March, we are looking for volunteers willing to do an hour or two of cleaning up around the tracks at North Head Sanctuary. For insurance purposes you'll need to register – ahead of the day if possible (email Judy Lambert at [twsombat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:twsombat@optusnet.com.au)) or when you arrive.

**Where:** Gatehouse archway at the Trust's former School of Artillery, off North Head Scenic Drive, Manly.

**When:** Any time between 9am & 1pm on Sunday 6 March.

### The Radar Mystery Solved

Geoff Lambert



In the November 2010 issue of our newsletter, as part of a series on Mysteries of North Head, I described a small radar installation tucked away behind the STP at Bluefish Point. The wonder is that nobody had since thought to take a photo through the keyhole until a friend of NHSF member Steve Johnson did so. It has to be admitted that such photos are a risky business – so easy to fall down an 80-metre cliff. I recently took my own keyhole photo to discover a rather peculiar version of a Raytheon shipboard radar with a mysterious attachment. To cut a rambling Google adventure rather short, it turns out the radar was an "ARPA" (Automatic Radar Plotting Aid), the property of the Sydney Ports Authority, who installed it in the old searchlight building in the 1970s and attached a TV camera to it. The whole contraption was remote controlled from the Sydney Ports Tower at Barangaroo, the radar screen being viewed from afar via the closed-circuit TV system. There were apparently five of these setups in and around Sydney Harbour.



I think we have now solved all of our mysteries except, perhaps, "The Case of the Skeleton with the Typewriter".

## The thistle saga in four parts - Part 1

Peter Macinnis

Macinnis is a Scots surname, but I disagree with my ancestors about the thistle, and all over North Head, I kill it. The Scots revere the thistle, because in legend, a Norseman, part of a sneak attack, once yelled out in pain when he walked into a thistle. The Scots woke and won the fight. If it prickles a Viking, it's a thistle.

Back when Australian Scots dreamed of bonnie braes and haggis and neeps, the thistle was an essential adornment for St Andrew's Day, Hogmanay and Burns' Night. As early as 1817, one James Chisholm kept a house called the 'Crown and Thistle' in Sydney.

In 1823, Donald M'Lean was publican at the 'Scotch Thistle' in Hobart. Now a word on terms: professional Scots are hardy pedants: they say one can scotch a snake not kill it (that's from the *Scottish Play*). By tradition, one drinks Scotch whisky, and they allow Scotch tape because it is a trade mark, but otherwise, they say, the correct adjective is "Scots".

Well *Onopordum acanthium*, usually taken to be THE Scotch thistle, is always called Scotch. Mind you, the common name is often given to *Silybum marianum*, and laymen often called it *Carduus* in colonial times.

Certainly, the earliest recorded importation was Mr. Gordon of Forcett in Tasmania, who in 1827, received "a few seeds of a magnificent variety of the real Scotch thistle", taken from inside the railing around the grave of Robbie Burns. The seeds did well, said the *Hobart Town Courier*:

*On the 1st of June last, which is scarcely half the growing season in England, the leaves were upwards of a yard in length.*

— *The Hobart Town Courier*, Saturday 8 March 1828, 3.

Still, the celebration of St Andrew in Hobart in 1829 (at the Macquarie Hotel), lacked real thistles. By 1832, the Scotch thistle was a pest in Hobart, thanks, not to a Scot, but to that carousing clergyman and magistrate, Robert Knopwood, who was born in Norfolk:

*A few years ago when the Rev. Mr. Knopwood lived at Cottage Green, he happened to have a Scotch thistle in his garden; the seeds of which disseminated themselves along the shore at the Battery, and the plants springing from them were admired and religiously protected by emigrating patriots of old Scotia who approached them.*

—*The Hobart Town Courier*, 28 January 1832, 2.

The thistles spread, but I will come to that next time.



Sydney Thistle Pipe Band, 1930s, featuring the writer's father.

## Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson

### The Preussen – Smallpox – part one

Mrs Mercker's infant died at 4 o'clock on 4 January 1887. Ferdinand was only 14 days old and his death was recorded as smallpox. He is buried in the Third Cemetery.

*Australian Town and Country Journal* - 8 January 1887

### "Smallpox on a steamer."

"Smallpox has again appeared in Australia; and once more the quarantine station, is well filled. This time there was no difficulty in tracing the source of the visitation, as previously to the arrival of the North German Lloyds steamer Preussen information that smallpox was on board was telegraphed.

The vessel arrived at Adelaide on December 15, where the passengers for that port were landed, and immediately placed in quarantine. A farther instalment of passengers was left at Melbourne; and on Sunday, December 26, the vessel arrived in Sydney and was at once quarantined. The Preussen is from Bremen, is of 4000 tons burden, and is commanded by Captain Pohli. She had on board 273 passengers and 120 crew. She was anchored in quarantine waters at Spring Cove; and a proclamation has been issued by the Governor extending the quarantine waters from Spring Cove, and forbidding any vessel or person to go within two cables' length of the shore between Green or Flagstaff Point in Port Jackson and Inner North Head, or within one cable's length of the shore between Inner North Head and Cabbage Tree Bay in the Pacific Ocean, or to hold any communication whatever with, the Preussen, or with any of her passengers either, on the vessel or elsewhere until farther notice.

Since then fully fifty cases of smallpox have developed; the number of cases in Adelaide and Melbourne having also increased. Two or three deaths have occurred and, altogether, this may be considered one of the most serious visitations which Australia has received.

But it is satisfactory to be able to say that the Board of Health does not consider that any great public danger is to be apprehended. As long as the disease can be confined to the quarantine ground the public health will not be affected. The port is at present recognised as clear; but if a single case of smallpox were to appear outside the quarantine ground, it would have to be at once declared an infected port; and vessels leaving would be subject to quarantine regulations at the port of destination. The prompt measures taken will, however, render it very impossible that anything so serious as this should happen."



The writer and his prey.