



North Head Sanctuary Foundation

Custodians of North Head

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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

Native Plant Nursery

If you would like to join us any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and 12noon, planting, removing weeds and doing maintenance, just turn up or email:

northhead@fastmail.com.au.

First Cemetery, Quarantine Station

Nothing remains of the First Cemetery but here is a description which was found by Kaye Lee:

"One person's poignant description -

Across the harbour is Spring Cove, where vessels lie that are under quarantine; and not far from the shore is the quarantine burial-ground, the approach to which is from a small well-sheltered bay just within the north head. The surrounding scene is enchanting; hills environ the burial-ground, and upon their declivities are erected the hospitals, while in the hollow is a beautiful dell, with a narrow and moss-gown path leading into it, following which you reach the burial-place midway. I came upon it unexpectedly in a joyous and merry mood, but instantly felt the influence of the scene. The tombstones of spectral whiteness contrasting with the dark foliage—the gurgling of the stream through the dell, and the occasional note of the whip-bird breaking the spell of silence—the old gum tree stretching its leafless arms over those decaying beneath the soil it once had shadowed—the mellowed light of evening upon the distant land (telling of a day for ever lost)—the tranquil solitude—all combined to give an air of solemn sadness to the scene. I have seen no spot where the dead repose which is more melancholy or more exquisitely picturesque than this lonely burial-place in the wilderness, where the howling of the storm, and the muffled beat of the surge sound a requiem to the dead—those hapless dead, who voyaged so many thousand miles, hopeful and expectant, and perished at the very entrance of the looked-for harbour, there to lie

unknelled, uncoffined and unknown."

Angas, GF Savage life and scenes in Australia and New Zealand being an artist's impression of countries and people at the antipodes with numerous illustrations; London, Smith Elder & Company, 1847; v.2, 200-1

Barbarian of the Bush!

Geoff Lambert

*Springtime and the coastal edge of the Wonthaggi Heathland turns bridal. Coastal Teatree [Leptospermum laevigatum] is lacy with fragile white blooms, trunks standing amid a litter of white petals. It holds a place dear in the hearts of beach campers, providing shade, shelter and privacy. **But not for me. I hate it!** Thus wrote Terri Allen of the South Gippsland Conservation Society. Bravo Terri!*

I said something like this one day when Doug Benson and I were leading a wildflower walk and were pointing out the difference between **Tea-Tree Scrub** and **Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub**. "You are not allowed to say that!", said Doug, "The plants just do what the plants do". Had I known then what I know now, I would have answered "No, Doug, they do what we tell them to do".



Both Doug and Nick Skelton realised that about two-thirds of what was probably ESBS (aka "vigorous ESBS"- top half of photo) as late as 1936, was transformed into Tea-Tree Scrub (aka "Senescent ESBS" or "Lepto"- bottom half of photo) in the intervening years. It was practically gospel that the transformation was due to the lack of fire. I believed this gospel- it holds true over much of Australia. On North Head, I do not believe it any longer. There is little evidence for it and much against it.

Over the course of our ecological survey work in 2012-2016, I began to change my ideas, believing that the patterns of the Tea Tree Scrub could only be explained by soil disturbance, the building of roads and other disturbances unrelated to lack of fire. In many instances,

ESBS and “Lepto” stand side by side in areas with an identical fire history. The only two patches of “ESBS” in Sydney that are dominated by Tea Tree are North Head and Malabar – both Army properties for decades. The Army did it.

“Worse” was to come. While eating lunch with the Plotting Room crew one day, Ross Baker said to me “*Look at this [stuff] – the Army planted it*”. I scoffed. I should not have scoffed. Beginning in about 1949, the Army made several attempts to revegetate North Head, planting “thousands of plants”, according to the Official History. A Major King is said to have insisted that every soldier had to plant 5 plants per day. In the early 1960s, the citizens of Vacluse complained of the visibility of “ugly buildings” on North Head spoiling their view. So, more trees were planted at North Fort. By the late 1980s, the Tea Tree had got completely out of hand. In 1991, soldiers were set to the task of selectively thinning the Tea Tree along North Fort Road. The “harvest” was chipped, placed on Mack trucks and dumped at Holsworthy Army Base. In April 1996, after years of lobbying, the Army achieved a long-held wish of burning the Tea Tree as part of an attempt to protect specimens of Camfield’s Stringbark. None of this did any good – the Tea Tree was here to stay. Probably still is.

Note: This is a personal view. It was formed after a study of ecological literature, visits to other ESBS sites, NAA official records, first-hand accounts, files, photographs, maps, aerial surveys, documentation in the Roden Cutler Research Centre, newspaper reports, tree-ring measurements and our studies of the way in which the Tea Tree clusters along roads and tracks. Much remains to be done to solidify my conclusions – especially from records in the National Archives Sydney Office.

Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson

Walter Helensworth MacCroanan aged 34 was the first WW1 soldier to be buried in the Third Cemetery in 1918.

Daily Observer (Tamworth, NSW) Sat 30 Nov 1918

“SOLDIERS OF THE NORTH -- At Home and Abroad
The first death on the Medic in quarantine from influenza was that of Pte Walter H. McCronan, of Tambar Springs. Pte. McCronan was invalided home, having lost his powers of speech through shell-shock. Some months ago, whilst bailing up a cow, his speech suddenly returned. He shortly, afterwards enlisted again and was proceeding to the front with reinforcements when he contracted the disease which proved fatal. It was the hardest of hard luck to escape the dangers of shot and shell and fall a victim to a disease that has until the recent outbreak not been considered a very serious visitation. The body of Pte. McCronan was buried at the quarantine cemetery on Sunday, with full military honors. His next of kin was given as Thos. Turner sen, a friend at Tambar Springs.”

Note The newspaper had the name wrong. The Honour Roll shows the spelling is MacCroanan.

Venomous Spiders - Of spiders & dunny seats part three of four

Peter Macinnis

The first known redback victim was a Bendigo chemist named Phillips, bitten while in “...the closet at the rear of his present residence”. You can read the news report in *The Age*, 27 December 1862, p.7. By chance, a doctor King was there, and he searched with a candle, finding a small black spider on the seat. It had a flat body, with a red mark on its back, without any doubt, a redback spider. Phillips’ symptoms included strong pains in the abdomen, the bowels, pain in the spine and muscles, spasms, convulsions, delirium, shivering and sleeplessness. He was treated with cloths dipped in turpentine and applications of liquid ammonia before being calmed with ether, opium and brandy, and he later recovered. The next two cases were seen by a Dr Carr about 80 km south-west, at Talbot, just a few months later, and I tracked them down in *The Age*, 17 April 1863, p. 5. The spider seems to match a redback in form, but not in colour. Note the discrepancy in colour from the standard textbook redback.



[A juvenile female redback. Note the colours](#)

It may have been a juvenile, but I have run a few tests, and 70% alcohol with vinegar, a plausible preservative, bleaches specimens. In any case, Carr was reported in *The Age*, 17 April 1863, p. 5 as having seen

... a brown spider, with a yellow streak down the back, the head being of a similar colour, which produces, under certain circumstances or in particular constitutions...

Carr’s first case was a miner named O’Connor, bitten on the scrotum at 6 am on 16 February 1863 “while sitting in a water-closet”. He felt the sting and complained of a tingling sensation, and only called for medical assistance at noon, when Carr found him in agony.

The scrotum, where stung, was red and indurated, but not much swollen, the penis was much enlarged, the prepuce oedematous containing a large quantity of white serous fluid, the organ presenting the appearance in fact of one affected with virulent gonorrhœa...



O’Connor had problems breathing, he was dizzy and he suffered loss of sight. Worse, he could not sleep, so he was dosed with opiates, camphor, ginger and laxatives. These, or the passing of time finally improved his situation.

[A more mature female redback](#)

We will come to the

second case next time.