



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation

## Custodians of North Head

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### Next Meeting Wed 1 March 2017, 7pm

at Bandicoot Heaven (Building 20).

Join us for a viewing of the following videos :- Costa Gardening, Sydney Walking Volunteers short video, day 5 (North Head), Final part of the first High-Definition video of the SWV walk (Palm Beach – North Head)- this has some really cool drone images of the cemetery. Everyone welcome.

### 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)

### Native Plant Nursery



Volunteers on our new planting area. This area will only be planted with low growing plants as it is a fire APZ.

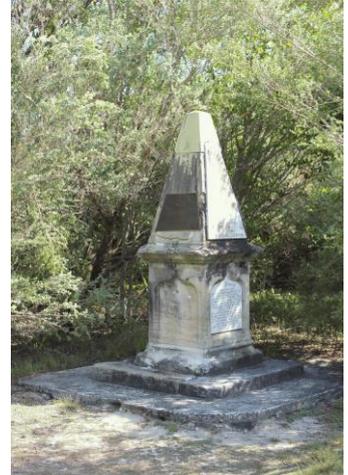
We have a lot of planting, weeding and maintenance to do looking after all our areas. We would love some help. If you would like to join us on any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and 12noon, just turn up or email: [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au).

### North Fort Road

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust will shortly commence works to upgrading fire safety infrastructure by providing a secure water supply for fire hydrants at North Fort. To do this work, it will be necessary to trench along North Fort Road.

### The OTHER Obelisk

Geoff Lambert



When the immigrant ship "Constitution" arrived at North Head on 27 May 1855, with 375 immigrants on board, 14 lives had already been lost to disease. On arrival, there were 12 cases of smallpox and 13 people were to die of this disease during the ship's 65 day quarantine. By the 25th of June, four masons from the ship had erected a "very nice monument, about 8 feet high" to those who had died at sea. Fifty years later, on Empire Day 24 May 1905, the first official "Empire Day", survivors of the quarantine and their descendants met for a reunion to, in their words, "jubilate". They brought with them two plaques recording their names, to affix to the monument. The story of there union appeared a week later in the Town and Country Journal.



A century after that, NSW Governor Marie Bashir, unveiled an additional plaque commemorating their internment. Described by the 1905 attendees as being "at the top of the hill", the monument still stands near the Second Cemetery, behind the Third Class Quarters, hidden from easy sight by a grove of tea-trees.

## BREAKING NEWS – MISSING HEADSTONE FOUND!

### Mystery of Jean Baptiste Adonis & The Missing Headstone

Kaye R. Lee

With stonemasons to begin restoration work soon on many of the headstones in the Third Cemetery, a search for a headstone not visible for many years was undertaken by cemetery bush care coordinator Jenny Wilson and the writer, in the hope that it might be found and added to the list of graves to be restored.

The missing headstone was that of a man identified in the Burial Register of the Third Cemetery as John Baptist Adonis, grave number 171. Stated in the Register to be 42 years of age, and admitted to the quarantine station on 1 May 1913, he died and was buried on 13 May that year, cause of death not stated.

This headstone was referred to most recently in a thesis by Sarah Janson entitled 'By the sad and mournful sea' mortuary memorialisation in the quarantine context (1). As Sarah had not found the actual headstone in her fieldwork however, trying to find it for possible restoration now proved irresistible.

So, armed with string, bamboo stakes and a schematic layout of the graves (2) we began our search. Perpendicular string lines were attached to headstones thought to be adjacent to Adonis' grave as shown on the schematic layout, Jenny's theory being, that the intersection of the two lines would lead us to the location of the Adonis headstone, as shown on the schematic layout. A few pokes with our stakes and excitingly, promising resistance to one stake suggested we'd hit something hard just west of the string intersection! Carefully removing the sandy soil, and blowing away the remaining sand that obscured the lettering, headstone was revealed. There it was, lying face up as it had fallen, with worn inscription still partly visible - J BAPT ADONIS. Success! Jenny's theory was right!



Prior to our search, as so little seemed to be known about John Baptist Adonis himself, and puzzled by his name, which seemed to me to be an anglicized version of a French or Spanish name, I obtained a copy

of his death certificate from NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages (3). His death certificate provided the following details –

**Name** John Baptist Adonis

**Date of death** 13 May 1913

**Age at death** 45 (not 42 as shown in Burial Register)

**Buried** 15 May 1913 at the Quarantine Station, North Head

**Occupation** Able seaman

**Causes of death** - broncho pneumonia & cardiac failure

**Born** in Seychells (sic)

**Family details** Unknown

**Notified** by John Stronach Master of ship E. J. Spence

From this data, the first step to finding out more about Adonis seemed to lie in his birth place, but a search of available online Seychelles' records of births, deaths and marriages (3) from 1865-1875 (to cover both recorded dates of age at death), revealed no John Baptist Adonis.

However on searching for the French sounding Jean Baptiste Adonis, (Seychelles then being under French rule) a single entry was found, Jean Baptiste Adonis, born 23 August 1868, mother Heloise Bonte (seamstress) and father possibly Fabi Adonis (fisherman). This date ties in closely with the 45 years of age recorded on John Baptist Adonis' death certificate, making his death just 3 months shy of his 45th birthday, and supporting the theory (together with the fact that the able seaman was born in the Seychelles) that both names relate to the same person. His French birth names of Jean Baptiste had probably been anglicized when he joined the British barque E J Spence as a crewmember, or perhaps earlier, a practice in use both in the past and much more recently in English-speaking domains.

Given the evidence found, I believe that the Adonis buried in the Third Cemetery is indeed Jean Baptiste Adonis, born 23 August 1868, died 13 May 1913. What though were the circumstances surrounding his death? Why was he in quarantine? What of the E J Spence? These answers and more in the next instalment.

### References

(1) Janson, S. By the sad and mournful sea : Mortuary memorialisation in the quarantine context p.29 University of Sydney, 2015 Downloaded 30/12/2016 from [ses.library.usyd.edu/bitstream/2123/14707/1/Janson%20S\\_\\_thesis\\_2015.pdf](https://ses.library.usyd.edu/bitstream/2123/14707/1/Janson%20S__thesis_2015.pdf)

(2) Gojak, D. Archaeological Inspection Report: Third Quarantine Cemetery: North Head; Figure 1, Graves recorded during survey by Denis Gojak NPWS Historical Archaeologist, July 1991

(3) New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages Death Certificate Registration No.9708/1913

(4) Cercle de Genealogie Maurice – Rodrigues Downloaded 12/2/17 from [crgmgenealogie.org/actes/acte\\_naiss.php](http://crgmgenealogie.org/actes/acte_naiss.php)