



North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

Custodians of North Head

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Next Meeting – Sat 25 November 2pm

At Bandicoot Heaven. Our speaker will be Tom Hazell and his talk Birds of Manly Lagoon. Everyone welcome.

Fire Weather Affecting North Head

When the [NSW Rural Fire Service \(RFS\)](#) has declared an 'Extreme' or 'Catastrophic' fire danger rating and put a total fire ban in place for the Sydney region, this means that as a result of this declaration, ALL BUSH TRACKS AND TRAILS AT NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY will be closed to the public during this total fire ban and Bandicoot Heaven will be closed and no Nursery work apart from watering.

Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

New volunteers needed

We are open on **Saturdays and Sundays between 10am and 4pm except as above**. Please call in and have a chat. We're sad to be losing two of our regular volunteers who are moving to other places. With their departure, we're keen to recruit new volunteers to help provide visitors with information about the bushland. Anyone interested should contact Judy Lambert (email: twswombat@iinet.net.au or phone 0427 217 580).

Native Plant Nursery

The Nursery grows mainly Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub plants for planting by our volunteers into degraded areas of North Head. You are welcome to join us. There is always planting, weeding and maintenance to be done. Please call in any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and noon when we are open, or email northhead@fastmail.com.au if you would like to join us.

North Fort Sandstone Wall

The Harbour Trust is carefully restoring a stone wall at North Head Sanctuary, that partially collapsed due to an extreme weather event in March 2022. The heavy rain during this event led to a rapid build-up of water at the base of the wall which undermined its foundations.



“Military heritage

Built circa 1933, the wall runs north to south and is associated with the historic North Fort Precinct. The collapsed section, now subject to restoration work, is located immediately opposite the visitor centre. Strategically located at the northern entrance to Sydney Harbour, North Fort played an important role in the defence of Sydney Harbour during the Second World War.

Restoration work

The restoration work is being carried out by a heritage engineer specialising in stonework as well as a heritage stonemason. These personnel will rebuild the collapsed section by hand, in sympathy to the original building methods. Improved drainage will also be constructed to ensure the wall can withstand future extreme weather events. It is anticipated this work will be completed by November 2023”.

<https://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/en/news/historic-wall-being-repaired-at-north-head-sanctuary/>

Pythons

Peter Macinnis

And now for something completely different...

As the *Monty Python* people used to say, but did you know that we have pythons of our own? Luckily, they aren't like the “Liverpool Monster” which alarmed people as it was at least forty five feet long, and three times the circumference of the human body, said *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* on 29 November 1822.

Every naturalist needs to know that the lengths of fearsome beasts are always exaggerated, but before the disastrous fire, almost three years back, there was a big diamond python in the hanging swamp, lying along the edge of the steel track, taking in the sun and digesting a meal (one hopes it was rabbit).



Knowing that Wilson and Swan say they only grow to 2.5 metres, this one was lying straight, so I paced it out, and it was definitely three metres long, which probably means it was a female. Their diet is mainly small mammals, birds and lizards, which they constrict.

In the past month, people have reported seeing a python crossing North Fort Road, and it was probably this one, which by this point had become roadkill.



Now I hate roadkill incidents, and when our daughter was doing her Honours, we took her to Hawk's Nest to get *Hormosira* material, and we stopped to admire a humungous python crossing the road. When a hoon coming towards us accelerated, without consultation, we stepped over the snake and stopped him until the snake was clear. I think her broughtings-up passed muster, that day.



So, I have form, and intent on spotting a donkey orchid, I went around to North Fort the other Tuesday and found a python on Scenic Drive: naturally, I slewed my car, put on the flashers and impeded traffic as necessary. The other people all stayed in their cars, fearful of this venomous threat.



The dead one has a 50-cent coin which is 32 mm across in the shot, from which I estimate the length at about 1.6 metres, while the one on the road was about 2 metres long. They aren't venomous, but if annoyed, they can inflict a nasty gashing bite. She and I exchanged a few pleasantries about the weather, and she headed off into the bush.

Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson
Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842-1954), 4 March 1901

"THE BUBONIC PLAGUE. A FATAL CASE ARRIVAL OF THE TROOPSHIP ANTILLIAN.

This is the stage of the year when a recrudescence of bubonic plague might reasonably, according to scientific data, be expected. A case which unfortunately terminated fatally has actually occurred in New South Wales territory, but happily it was not of local origin, but was imported from over sea. Therefore, despite the experiences of Saturday, it cannot be said that another epidemic has begun, but in order to stave off the evil day as long as possible vigorous action will be taken by all the authorities.

When the transport Antillian, which was sent to this port from South Africa for the purpose of taking Australian troops to the centre of war, arrived in Sydney Harbour on

Saturday morning it was observed that she was signaling "illness on board." Medical officers put off to her, and special officers from the Board of Health followed. The rat-catching staff stood off under the circumstances and waited orders. A man, Claus Olsen, a seaman, was sick, and, according to the ship's books, his indisposition was first observed on the preceding Wednesday. The case looked bad, the man was conveyed on shore and placed under treatment and observation, and tests to prove the nature of the sickness were commenced. Meantime the vessel and all her officers and crew were held in the strictest isolation, and the disinfection of the ship by fumigation was entered upon. Yesterday it became abundantly evident to the medical men that the illness of Olsen was true plague, and that it was advancing with great rapidity. The doctors could not save the man's life. He died at 3.20 p.m. The officers and the crew knew previously from Dr. Ashburton Thompson that if the case was one of plague they would be quarantined, and when the death occurred, they were told the period of quarantine would be 10 days, and that the ship also would have to remain at the station for a similar period. During the outbreak of last year, the Premier insisted on that time being made the period of detention, although the official medical opinion is that it is unnecessarily long. If this imported case were the only one in Australia there would be little cause for anxiety, because it is comparatively easy to effectively cleanse all vessels arriving, and to meet cases of plague aboard ship at the portals of the country and continue them to the quarantine detention grounds. For such purposes staffs of workers have all along been maintained, the great object and main duty being to exterminate the rats. But in Queensland a case of plague has occurred, in which the victim was a resident of a place near Brisbane. That, it is acknowledged by the authorities, looks bad, because it is incomparably more difficult to deal with one such case than with a score of imported cases. The reasons are too obvious to warrant recapitulation. It cannot be denied that there is a possibility of the disease, once it gets a hold in one state, spreading to others, and at this juncture the Government and the health authorities earnestly appeal to every householder in the State, and particularly to those in populous parts, to conscientiously co-operate in securing a maximum of cleanliness, and making it difficult for rats to find a living place."

Claus Olsen was buried in the Third Cemetery. He was 19 years old at the time of his death.

Bandicoot Heaven & Native Plant Nursery:

To become a volunteer, you must be a member of North Head Sanctuary Foundation and be COVID vaccinated.

<https://www.northheadsanctuaryfoundation.org.au/join/20190629%20NHSF%20membership%20form.pdf>