



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation

## Custodians of North Head

ABN 97093480659 P.O. Box 896, Balgowlah, NSW 2093

northheadsanctuaryfoundation.org.au

email [northhead@fastmail.fm](mailto:northhead@fastmail.fm)

Newsletter No 8 August 2013

### Annual General Meeting

#### 2pm on Saturday 17 August 2013

Our Annual General Meeting will be held from 2pm on 17 August 2013 in our Education Room, Bandicoot Heaven. At this meeting elections will be held for all positions and updates given. Our guest speaker is Dave Thomas (EcoDivers) who is a very interesting speaker, so please come along and enjoy.

### Education Centre – Bandicoot Heaven

Our Education room is open every weekend, from 10am to 4pm in Building 20. Call in and see us for a chat or information. Become a volunteer.

### Native Plant Nursery

Our watering system in the igloo is now working and half the bench spaces are filled. If you would like to help with planting, weeding or growing plants on a Tuesday or Friday morning, please email [northhead@fastmail.fm](mailto:northhead@fastmail.fm).

### The Sue Halmagyi Endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) Regeneration Trial

Hannah Reid

The North Head Sanctuary Foundation and other volunteers have been involved with a project which demonstrates a management tool for revegetating ESBS and achieving a low fire risk in areas surrounding infrastructure on North Head. The trial has been titled in Sue's name to commemorate her contribution to the project and the North Head Sanctuary Foundation

ESBS is an endangered ecological community, which occurs on the ancient sand dunes in the centre of North Head. This ecological community requires disturbance (naturally occurring as fire) at intervals (8-25 years) to initiate germination of most of the plant species in this community.

Without fire it is possible for one species, in this case *Leptospermum laevigatum* (tea tree) to become dominant, overshadowing other species. In addition the introduction of the rabbit has also been devastating on the species balance as they feed on seedlings.

Together these influences have resulted in lower biodiversity and a higher fuel load which is not suitable for asset protection zones or as a habitat for many local species. Currently senescent ESBS surrounding infrastructure is being sprayed with herbicide and removed. This trial aims to stop this removal, instead maintaining the ecosystem in a low fuel and high biodiversity state.



Disturbed ESBS area after removal of tea tree Taken 31 July 2012

This trial is designed to demonstrate that ESBS can be conserved and maintained in a fuel-reduced state if rabbit grazing and shrub growth over 30cm (annually) is prevented. In July 2012, over dominating tea trees were removed from the first 10 x10 m trial area and rabbit exclusion fences were installed around two of three (2 x 10 m) plots within this area. Raking was then used to stimulate germination in one of the fenced and the unfenced plots. The relative abundance of seedlings has been measured at intervals throughout the year and data has shown that plant diversity and abundance is increasing especially in fenced plots.



same area taken almost a year later. 26 July 2013

The second trial area was treated in June/July this year and there is one more study area to be completed later this year.



Many hands at work on the second lot of plots on 2 July 2013

### Q Station Community Open Day

Will be held on Sunday 22 Sept, free entry. For more information please see [www.qstation.com.au](http://www.qstation.com.au)

### *Parsonia straminea*



This vine has grown on the side of our Nursery bay. Seeded by the wind or a bird.

### Hope Springs Eternal

Geoff Lambert

During the tunnel tours conducted by the North Fort volunteers on North Head it is commonly stated that the water running down the internal drains has come from French's Forest because "gravity does not work on North Head" and that it is the purest drinking water in Sydney. This echoes another Urban Myth that the spring on the Wakehurst Parkway was fed by pure Blue Mountains water.

None of this is true. The water leaking into the tunnel system at North Head comes from the sand in which the tunnels are embedded. The sand acts as a giant sponge and slowly releases rainwater. The Hanging Swamp is fed the same way. Seeing as that there a number of old septic tanks still embedded in the sand, no one should drink this water. It is easy to see that the water is not pure by the variety of organisms that grow in it where it emerges into the sunlight. Sewage also contaminates the Wakehurst Parkway spring—which is why people suddenly stopped queueing up to drink it a few years ago.

### Railways on North Head

Geoff Lambert

As you wander around on North Head, you can often see what look like old rails and railway sleepers. That is indeed what they are. There were at least three railways on North Head.

The QS incline railway. Like the Scenic Railway at Katoomba, this was a steep cable-hauled railway for carrying luggage from the wharf area to the upper levels. It even had a miniature locomotive and the shed for this still exists. The incline is now the "Grand Staircase", which featured in "The Biggest Loser".

A standard-gauge railway along the Avenue of Honour, which was used to carry the 9-inch guns to the emplacements. A rail from it can be seen in the Hanging Swamp.

The world's widest-gauge railway (14 feet), which was used to assemble the guns in their emplacements.



North Fort Photo Album AL03

This photo shows these two latter railways



"Colin Wear Collection, NSW DEC"

This photo shows the QS railway engine outside the locomotive shed

### Stony Range Botanic Garden Spring Festival Sunday September 8, 9am-4pm

Native plant sales, Feature Creatures, WIRES display, face painting, guided walks, bush food, native orchid cultivation etc.

613 Pittwater Road DEE WHY