



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

## Custodians of North Head

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### Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

We are closed due to COVID-19. We are working towards a COVID-safe re-opening.

### Native Plant Nursery

We are back at work and there is plenty to do.

If you would like to join us, please call in any Tuesday or Friday morning between 8am and noon to have a look.

One needs to be a member of North Head Sanctuary Foundation to join us. For more details, please send an email to [northhead@fastmail.com.au](mailto:northhead@fastmail.com.au)

### Enjoy North Head



There is always something new to see. Here is a female of the carpenter bee (*Xylocopa (Lestis)*) on a *Parsonsia straminea*. The female bee has a shiny metallic blue green body with relatively little surface fur.

### My North Head

My name is Julie Rigoni (nee Sewell). I was born December 1951 at RNS Hospital and my first home was at the Quarantine Station North Head Manly. A life full of adventure and seclusion.

My first home has recently been renamed "the G & Tea House" and dressed in an era of old times. Now open to the public as the host home for the new sunset music evenings. I don't recall a lot about this house other than it was very small but had a huge sloping yard adjoining the glasshouse.

One occasion I recall in that home was when my mother's dress caught alight by the fuel stove which was used for cooking and heating. My father quickly found a long hall mat and rolled mum in the mat to extinguish the fire and prevent burning. This may have been the reason we moved to our second home S10, now known as "Dinty's Cottage". My father was known as Dinty and such a joy to

see the house named after my father. My dad loved his work and the lifestyle of the Quarantine station.



Dad returned from the war and like so many people, needed to find work and a place for his family to live. Whilst I was not even born at that stage, I know dad and mum were so happy when dad got the job at the quarantine station which also provided a residence for all those workers. Many of dad's (and his co-workers) projects still stand today. The glasshouse which was full of magnificent orchids was one of the projects built by the workers. They cared for the station with much love and attention.

The role of the Quarantine assistants (dad) was to maintain the station so it was always ready and operational should the station be needed to be used as a Quarantine facility. I only recall two or three times when the station was used in an official capacity. Both times were people arriving into Sydney with suspected cholera. They were required to be isolated for a two week period and kept under medical care until confirmed no threat to the community. On one of those occasions my dad was required to act as the supervisor for the patient (1) and the medical staff at the hospital. This happened to be a Christmas period and I recall pushing dad's Christmas present under the fence and seeing dad in the distance and as expected we could not touch or be close to each other. I recall missing dad a great deal that year. As a child we knew our place in the community and the awareness of what a quarantine station meant. A bit like life today! There were also one or two occasions we could not attend school because of fear of a virus spreading. This was only precautionary and no virus was discovered. As a resident of the Quarantine Station, we were required to be vaccinated every few years. My first vaccination was when I was only 6 weeks old. We were vaccinated against

smallpox, Cholera and probably other infectious diseases. I recall standing in line at the administration building with the other kids waiting for the "jab" and feeling a little scared.

Growing up at the Quarantine station was not a normal childhood and quite remote. I recall there were about 8 families including 11 children, all of similar age. We all played together and usually took the two mile hike to and from Manly Public school each day -up and down Darley Road together.

At that stage there were no buses, so walking was the only option. On occasions (after school) a few kids, would take the beach route home around past the old swimming pool and sailing club up Stuart Street, around Little Manly past the gas works, over Collins flat and across to Store Beach and up our own "secret" track to the 1st & 2nd class passengers' quarters at the Quarantine station. This certainly was not a quick route home but a heap of fun for a bunch of kids. I don't think we were actually allowed in the 1st & 2nd class quarters area, but we did anyway.

I recall the combination of kids was heavily weighted to boys, so ALL the girls learnt how to play rugby and rugby league and cricket early – there was no such thing as discrimination in those days and it worked for everyone. The boys needed enough players to create a team and the girls did not want to miss out, simply a win / win for all. The fortunate thing was we had unlimited space to play any sport we wanted. Our dads, as caretakers, would make sure the pitch was mowed on Fridays ready for our very own Quarantine station test match on the weekends. This was real tackle football!!

School holidays did not include vacation care, it was a time to create your own fun. Most parents worked so little or no parental supervision. In the main I recall we had so much to do and explore we did not have time to get into any trouble. Other than the rugby and cricket games we built cubby houses in the bush, walked every inch of the station. My brother Neville had a little Manly Junior sailing boat, called "Viking". Neville sailed at Manly sailing club each Saturday. In the school holidays we would attach some oars to Viking and row out a little past the wharf and fish for leather jackets. At the end of a day's fishing, we would take the leather jackets home where dad cooked them for our dinner. I am sure they were the biggest leather jackets ever caught at the station!!

Despite spending a lot of our time in holidays and weekends at the beach we were not allowed to swim in the pristine station beach. The area was ripe with sharks at the time, mainly attracted close to the beach because the fishermen used the beach to pull up nets of mullet. Even watching the fisherman and their nets was another form of activity for the kids.

The temptation to swim was huge although, as kids we would see the sharks circling the beach so we were aware of the danger. On one occasion all the kids pooled our efforts and decided we would build our own beach pool. We moved massive stones into the water at the northern end of the beach and attempted to make it safe. So proud

of our efforts we called it a day (although I think it took many days) only to return after a big tide to find they had all washed back onto the beach – so much for that swimming pool.

There is an area above a suspended rock behind the luggage rooms (the now museum). As a very small child exploring and as kids, we were looking for a new cubby house location and thought this spot would be perfect only to start digging and found bones, we kept digging and found more bones. At this point we were all getting a bit frightened, so we told our parents who contacted the appropriate people. It turns out this was a site of early Aboriginal people and someone had died in that spot. Because I was young, I don't know what happened after then, but the memory remains. Our days and years were filled with exploring and adventure. Leaving home to go to the shops in Manly was a big day out. I recall being allowed to walk to Manly and look at Christmas decorations in the department store in the middle of the Corso.

Anzac Day was always a special day, I guess because most of our dads were returned soldiers (although my dad never spoke of the war). Many of the kids would prepare our own memorial at the Station and hold our own little service or we would get my dad to drive us to Manly for the 5am Anzac service.

It was always very exciting when relatives and friends came to visit. The process was that any non-resident was required to sign in / out in a record book to obtain access through the gate. As kids we would run to the front gate to greet them as having visitors not that very irregular. Every year just before Christmas the Station would open the beach area to the Far West Home patients, most children suffered from polio or conditions with limited mobility. The station would put on the best day of the year to make them welcome with ice cream and fairy floss, games and generally a lot of fun. Many of these children had never seen a beach or sea. Their excitement was overwhelming with joy. The resident kids at the station took great pride in showing many of the Far West kids around with pride. This was a closed event and only for the resident families and Far West staff and patients. We felt very special and naturally Santa arrived.

### **Third Cemetery**

Jenny Wilson

Corporal Thomas John Treacy enlisted on 7 February 1918 in the Australian Imperial Force, as a single man. He married Doris Laidlaw on 28 March 1918. Interestingly she carried a bouquet of white dahlias and asparagus fern, which is now an environmental weed found over a wide range of coastal and sub-coastal habitats including North Head. On 2 November 1918, the ship HMAS Medic left Sydney Harbour for the war zone with general service reinforcements but was recalled owing to the signing of the armistice and returned to Sydney on 21 November 1918 with nearly 200 cases of influenza, mostly of a mild type. Thomas was on the S.S. Medic and died on 28 November 1918, aged 29. He was buried in the Third Cemetery.