



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

## Custodians of North Head

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### Education Room - Bandicoot Heaven

We are open on Saturdays and Sundays 10-4 with a COVID-safe plan in place. New volunteers welcomed.

### Native Plant Nursery

We can always use more hands to help with planting and weeding. There is plenty to do.



Remember this photo from last month?  
The photo on the left taken on 23 March by Bo Foley shows the pond after rain.

If you would like to join us, please call in any Tuesday or Friday morning

between 8am and noon to have a look. We do not work in heavy rain. 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

Notice how hard this echidna is working to find a meal.



For an interesting article - Dig this: a tiny echidna moves 8 trailer-loads of soil a year, helping tackle climate change. Go to <https://theconversation.com/dig-this-a-tiny-echidna-moves-8-trailer-loads-of-soil-a-year-helping-tackle-climate-change-155947>

### Names and Backobourkia

Peter Macinnis

My fondness for spiders stretches back to when I opened a copy of *Australian Spiders* in 1958 and saw a striking resemblance between the frontispiece and my Latin teacher.



Wolf spider shot from Mckeown's *Australian Spiders*

I blame Lyn McNeil's sharp eyes for spotting an unusual orb weaver in the low growth of the oval in 2017. I took a picture or five and repaired to the reference books. I tentatively identified it as *Backobourkia* and got the giggles. Just recently, I got that confirmed, and now I can tell the tale.



As my Latin teacher knew (I once offered *Mater tua caligasset* in a test, and I only translate that in private, but she gave me full marks), my sense of humour is a weakness. I giggled because I know about *Cooperbrookia*. Roger Carolin (who danced at Chris' and my wedding), found a new genus of Goodeniaceae near Cooperbrook (outside Taree). Instead of wasting hours looking through the records for an unused name, he chose *Cooperbrookia*, guessing rightly that nobody would have used the name before.

He got away with it, but my current work has shown me how, in the internecine guerrilla warfare that we call

taxonomy, both the platypus and the echidna had many names, as people ruthlessly applied the nomenclature codes. If you know about Soviet Russia's *Nomenklatura*, the codes are far more oppressive.

The echidna was initially given the name *Myrmecophaga* in 1792, this being the genus of a South American placental ant-eater, but our spiny monotreme is biologically very different.

The name went because the Australian anteaters just didn't fit, so Georges Cuvier suggested calling the animal *Echidna*, the name of a monster, half-woman and half-snake in Greek mythology, the mother of the Sphinx, Cerberus (the three-headed, serpent tailed dog that guarded the Greek underworld), and other monsters. Alas, a moray eel had already been called that, so it became *Tachyglossus*, but the Australian invaders had already adopted 'echidna' and they stick by it. *Platypus* also got the shove when somebody found the name ('flat-foot') had already been allocated to a beetle.

The codes of nomenclature are why Mike Archer offers up names like *Montypythonoides* and *Thingodonta* (though some acquaintances of mine overruled him on *Hotcrossbunodon*). If you use a unique name, then your name stands.

And that is why *Backobourkia*, far from the inland, will long flourish on North Head. Its name is safe.

## My North Head

NORTH HEAD QUARANTINE STATION  
SPRING/SUMMER 1971

In the 1960 and 1970's travel was escalated to the sky. Any tourist landing in Australia without vaccination for designated contagious diseases had to be quarantined for the term of incubation e.g., smallpox needed 2 weeks. The situations requiring the use of the North Head Quarantine Station in 1971 were far from the situations which demanded quarantine during the 2020 Pandemic, but the outcome was the same - preventing the disease spreading into the general community.

We arrived in Sydney financially destitute and needing employment for a few months before commencing midwifery. Quarantine was a given. It was actually a situation of observation. A traveller, who maybe had a medical condition precluding vaccination, on arriving in Australia was immediately brought to the Quarantine Station to wait out the incubation period of a disease they may have contracted. The Quarantine Doctor came over on the police launch about once a week and landed at the wharf at Quarantine Beach. He then did an examination of the patients.

The conditions at the Quarantine Station were basic and without insect screens so our European patients were at the mercy of flying insects especially moths at night which were huge. One patient, a racing driver, who had a horrible skin complaint which prevented him having the

smallpox vaccine, would sit with his arms around his knees petrified of the creepy crawlies.

Our time was taken up with day-to-day chores and 'occupational therapy'. The buildings were large and leant to activity and exercising.

The rules of not leaving the building were strict. We always accompanied the patients and were not to cross paths with other patients at all, so we had to book walking time with the manager. The walks on North Head were interesting as we found the Australian natives glorious and the heady astringent freshness wonderful. Not so for some tourists who found the undergrowth scratchy and threatening and were quite fearful of the 'wildlife'. We loved the rock carvings showing the names of the ships quarantined and their crew. Also, the pictures they carved, and we believe some of the crew were stone masons. Quarantine was a different experience, and the sunset was unforgettable.

Alison Neilly & Libby Brice

Alison and Libby met while nursing at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Alison was born in Dorrigo then lived in Grafton before nursing training in Sydney.

Libby was born and lived on the North Shore of Sydney. They travelled extensively together before returning to Australia and beginning families in Sydney. They both have a love for our country and an understanding of the commitment our forebears made to preserve and respect the Australian flora and fauna.

## Third Cemetery

Jenny Wilson

Private Robert Fairley enlisted on 30 August 1918 in the Australian Imperial Force. He was born in Glasgow Scotland on 5 July 1899. He was an orchardist in Mittagong. He was on the ship HMAT Medic which left Sydney Harbour on 2 November 1918 for the war zone with general service reinforcements but was recalled owing to the signing of the armistice. The ship returned to Sydney on 21 November 1918 with nearly 200 cases of influenza, mostly of a mild type. Robert died on 27 November 1918 and was buried in the Third Cemetery.

Sunday Times (Sydney, NSW : 1895 - 1930), Sunday 1 December 1918, page 3

### "PTE BOB FAIRLEY DIES AT EIGHTEEN

Young Australian Who Had Waited Four Years to Enlist Falls Victim to Influenza

Private Robert Fairley, who died of influenza on Wednesday, was the second son of Captain and Mrs. Fairley, of Joadja, Mittagong. He was only 14 years of age when the war broke out, but, immediately after his 18th birthday he enlisted, happy in the knowledge that he would be able to go at last. Meantime his elder brother, who went away with the 13th Battalion, was reported missing on April 11, 1917. The Fairley family is most highly respected in the Mittagong district, and general regret is expressed for the loss of a most promising and patriotic young Australian."