



# North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

## Custodians of North Head

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Newsletter No 195 May-June 2025

### General meeting on 14 June

A note for your diary that our next general meeting is on **Saturday 14 June at 2pm** in Bandicoot Heaven. An email will be sent in the week prior to the meeting with further details, including our guest speaker.

### Resident ringtail possum

Fiona Wolfenden



Resident ringtail possum

Photo: Fiona Wolfenden

As a new volunteer it's been a delight to meet the 2 and 4 legged inhabitants of North Head Sanctuary. I've been impressed by the warm welcome, energy and dedication of the volunteer team. This ringtail above is one of three which have made a home in our tea shed.

### Remembering Jenny

On the anniversary of Jenny Wilson's passing we remember her extraordinary dedication and contribution to the work of the North Head Sanctuary Foundation. Indeed, the energy she brought to her various roles was so large it has taken several volunteers to fill her shoes over the past year.

A plaque commemorating Jenny's huge contribution to North Head is being prepared and will be installed at the northern end of the old oval, surrounded by the plants she loved. Members will be notified of further details in due course.

### Greenhood Orchid



This greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis* sp.) usually flowers in April-May, on tracks near the Third Cemetery.

The flower is about 30mm long, and sits on a stem 100mm long.

Photo: Peter Macinnis

### Q: Long and skinny means a snake, right?

Peter Macinnis

A: Not necessarily a snake: earthworms may be rare on North Head, and I think I have seen three in a dozen years, but they *are* there. In this photo-essay, I have tried to offer scales for size, and this worm (probably *Lumbricus terrestris*) was briefly on my hand for that reason.



There are also snakes, of sorts. Several Facebook 'experts' swore that the snake below was an 'eastern brown', but it is in fact a marsh snake (*Hemiaspis signata*), which lives on frogs, and is mildly venomous. As the name implies, it shows up in swampy areas.



I think that most sightings of a 'brown snake' are the common scalyfoot (*Pygopus lepidopodus*), one of our legless lizards. Weaving up through the steel walking track, the one below was lucky to escape injury. The vestigial leg is highlighted.



Below is what I call a 'legless lizard', and it has legs, as you can see, but I cannot ID it further. I am not a

herp, but I used to work with them, and they said a lot of the legless lizard species were recognised only by their DNA. This one was uncovered near St Barbaras Avenue.



In April, long and skinny is likely to be processionary caterpillars, aka 'itchy grubs' (*Ochrogaster lunifer*). Do not touch! They are usually found, following a leader, looking for another *Acacia*. There are often 20 or more: this group was inside the nursery compound.



For real snakes, give me a python any day. I stopped traffic for the one below in March last year, when it was crossing Scenic Drive. I stopped the cars, because a similar one was roadkill on North Fort Road a week earlier. I slewed my car across the road, put on my flashers, and started taking photos. Below is a 'carpet snake' or diamond python, *Morelia spilota*, said to grow to 2.5 metres, but I paced along a larger one in the hanging swamp, which was definitely over 3 metres. (Most sharks and snakes are reported at twice their real length, but my pacing is always within 3%).



Interestingly, all the cars stopped obediently, although everyone stayed in their cars as I walked around the snake, chatting to it and taking shots.

Then a few days later, just before the AGM last year, a python had settled in Bandicoot Heaven. I was teaching it to sing 'We Shall Not Be Moved', but Guillermo the ranger took a broom and said 'Yes you shall'. In all, I had three snakes in 15 days, which is pretty good going.

### Third Quarantine Cemetery Mrs de Sturler

Kaye Lee

Sitting just inside the back alignment of the cemetery towards the west, her grave is ornate, the wording formal, yet brief - a decorated marble cross adorns the grave, and below, the words Mrs de Sturler, 25 September 1911. This unusual brevity very cleverly hides inaccuracies in both Quarantine records<sup>(1)</sup> and that of NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages<sup>(2)</sup> - even perhaps how old her husband thought she was.

Born Katherine Mary Cleary on 28 May 1877<sup>(3)</sup>, Mrs De Sturler was the eldest of five children of Dr Martin and Mrs Letitia Cleary of Beechworth<sup>(4)</sup>. Known to family, friends, and her school teachers as Daisy, she was obviously a good student, gaining many prizes in her matriculating year<sup>(5)</sup>.



Daisy married Jonkheer (or Jhr, an honorary title) Wilhelm Eduard de Sturler in Sydney on 21 October 1910<sup>(6)</sup>, so was then 33, an older bride for the time. He has been variously described as a Baron in the press (perhaps to provide the gravitas that the Dutch Joeer lacked in Australia) and the owner of tea plantations near Britanzoig, Java<sup>(7)</sup>.

Now Mrs de Sturler, Daisy sailed back to Melbourne on the SS Van Linschoten the following year with her husband and sister Alice Cleary after an extended holiday in Java. She was, however, diagnosed with smallpox after the ship left Brisbane, resulting in all on board being taken into quarantine at North Head on 1 September, 1911. Daisy finally succumbed to disease on 25 September, and though suffering from smallpox, was thought to have died from a tropical disease, her death recorded as both smallpox and (though difficult to read) funiculus asthenia<sup>(1)</sup>.

Unfortunate in death, but equally so in official records, Daisy's name was incorrectly recorded in quarantine records at admission as Kathleen May, not Katherine Mary, and her age as 28<sup>(1)</sup>. She would have been 34 when she died. Further, her name was also registered incorrectly with NSW Births Deaths & Marriages at Manly (probably by Quarantine staff based on their incorrect record<sup>(2)</sup>).



Whilst Daisy's story ends there, that of her jewels (and her husband), continues. Enter one Ivy Lane, described as "a fashionably dressed, attractive young woman", arrested on 10 April 1912 for the theft and pawning of jewellery belonging to Jhr Wilhelm Edward de Sturler. Both entities gave varying stories in Court, but it would seem they had 'got about' and lived together as man and wife for a time, and de Sturler had shown Ivy Daisy's jewellery whilst staying in Sydney. In court, he testified that "she asked me for it, but I told her I could not give it away as it was my dead wife's". More details of this salacious story, so soon after Daisy's death, can be found in various newspapers of the day<sup>(8)</sup>.

(1) Register of Deaths at the Quarantine Station

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=314138> Jump to Page 66

(2) NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages

<https://familyhistory.bdm.nsw.gov.au/lifelink/familyhistory/search/deaths?> Enter Kathleen Mary, death 25/09/1911

(3) Argus, Wednesday 30 May 1877, page1 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/246481> retrieved 25/04/25

(4) <https://my.rio.bdm.vic.gov.au/efamily-history/683a84b2e3cdeb057247e083/results?q=efamily>

(5) <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169277715>

(6) NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages

<https://familyhistory.bdm.nsw.gov.au/lifelink/familyhistory/search/marriages?> Enter Groom family name: De Sturler, Bride's Family name: Cleary, and Date of marriage 21/10/1910. (Wilhelm's first names are given as John WE, John apparently incorrectly recorded instead of Jhr)

(7) SMH, Tuesday 26 September 1911, Page 17

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/15277289/1295368> retrieved 02/05/25

(8) SMH, Thursday 13 June 1912, page 4

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/15277289/1295368> The Truth Sunday 2 June 1912 Page 5

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/168730607?browse=ndp%3Abrowse%2Ftitle%2Ftitle%2F699%2F1912%2F06%2F02%2Fpage%2F16125669%2Farticle%2F16873060>