



North Head Sanctuary Foundation Inc

Custodians of North Head

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Headstones reinstated

Kaye Lee



The highly anticipated reinstatement of the headstones of fourteen Australian Service Personnel in the Third Quarantine Cemetery has now been completed, the result of collaborative efforts by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and its volunteers, the OAWG and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).⁽¹⁾ It's well worth a visit to the Cemetery to see these impressive marble memorials, a few of which are pictured above.

(1) Office of the Australian War Graves web site <https://www.dva.gov.au/recognition-and-commemoration/office-of-australian-war-graves/current-projects-and-announcements>

2026 general meeting - 2pm 13 June

Greg Mullins, Firefighter, former Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, Councillor with Australia's Climate Council and founding member of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, is the speaker for the next general meeting. His topic, "Good fire. Bad fire. What's the difference?" is a discussion about climate change and escalating fire risk. We look forward to seeing you there. Details will be forwarded by email in the week prior.

IndigiGrow visit

Jan Ritchie

A group of 18 volunteers enjoyed a great April day visiting the IndigiGrow Native Plant Nursery at La Perouse, arranged as a learning day to improve our own native plant propagation and nurturing skills. After arriving there mid-morning by carpooling, we spent the next couple of hours being blown away with admiration for the achievements of this wholesale nursery which is 100% owned and operated by local Aboriginal enthusiasts.

CEO Peter Cooley led us around the site explaining how they are dedicated to care for Country through local education, training and employment, and collaboration with the corporate world. Peter described how they focus both on bushfoods as well as sharing our goal to restore the critically endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS). It was encouraging to see they join us in doing all in their power to nurture the remnants of ESBS existing along the coastal headlands from La Perouse north to our headland. After a fascinating

tour around the site, many of us purchased seedlings and small pots to take home. We then proceeded to enjoy a lovely lunch together at the Yarra Bay Skiff Club looking out over sparkling Botany Bay waters, a fitting end to an excellent day all round. IndigiGrow www.indigigrow.com.au



Peter Cooley with NHSF volunteers

Photo: Jan Ritchie

The work of our propagation team

Christy Watson

Nursery volunteers, working under an agreement with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, undertake bush regeneration and revegetation of many formerly cleared areas of North Head Sanctuary. These revegetated areas supplement remnant bushland and provide habitat for native fauna, including a threatened population of long-nosed bandicoots, vulnerable eastern pygmy possums, many visiting and resident birds, reptiles, frogs, and echidnas. All vegetation planted by volunteers is grown in our on-site nursery from seeds and cuttings from local native plants within the Sanctuary. Much of North Head's vegetation is Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS), a Critically Endangered ecological community reduced to small fragments of its original range. Our propagation efforts aim to support the recovery of ESBS and the wider local plant community of over 400 species recorded on North Head. This includes the endangered Sunshine Wattle subspecies, *Acacia terminalis terminalis*, and the threatened stringybark, *Eucalyptus camfieldii*.

This year, the team aims to propagate around 60 species with a continued focus on species characteristic of ESBS and the local species which make up our specific stand of the endangered plant community.

Propagation from seed is preferred to promote genetic diversity. Many species require specific environmental conditions to germinate, so propagators often pre-treat seeds to mimic these conditions and break dormancy. In banksia species, fire helps to crack open their woody pods releasing

seed to germinate in smoke-enriched soils, so propagators heat mature banksia cones and soak seed in smoke water before sowing. The team's methods draw on past experience, including that of the late Jenny Wilson, together with ongoing research and experimentation. Recently the group has celebrated high yields of *Banksia marginata* and *Banksia aemula*.

Volunteers also propagate by cuttings taken from plants, regularly walking the site to select material at the right growth stage. Cuttings are wounded, treated with rooting hormone and placed in a well-aerated soil mix. While some species take patience and are notoriously slow to strike such as Fuchsia heath (*Epacris longiflora*), we have faster and higher strike rates with species such as the red-flowered *Grevillea speciosa* and more recently *Darwinia fascicularis*.

Following preparation, both seeds and cuttings are transferred into the nursery "Igloo", where a mist system assists germination and root formation. Seed germination can occur within a few weeks for some species, while other species may take several months to produce their first true leaves and be ready for "pricking out", when volunteers carefully transplant young plants into forestry tubes.



The nursery 'Igloo'

Photo: Christy Watson

As plants mature, they are moved through a staged hardening-off process designed to prepare them for outdoor conditions. Depending on species and seasonal conditions, the process from propagation to planting may take several months or more than a year. Once established, the plants are ready for our volunteer bush regenerators to plant throughout the Sanctuary.

Propagation work takes place from 8am to midday on Tuesdays and Fridays at our nursery behind the Bandicoot Heaven education room on North Fort Road. If you would like to join Lynette Jones and Jenny Muirhead on Tuesdays or Caroline Greentree and Christy Watson on Fridays, email christybw@gmail.com or visit during nursery hours.

Third Quarantine Cemetery

Kaye Lee

In 1900, two young girls lived in Paddington, Stella at 20 Gordon Street and Mary at 80 Dowling Street. Both were to succumb to the scourge of bubonic plague and were buried in the Third Cemetery.

Some 39 Paddington residents caught the dreaded disease, 13 of those dying.⁽¹⁾

The younger lass, Mary Rawlinson, was 6 years old when she died on 7 April 1900. She lived with her parents Charles and Jane Rawlinson, and brothers Stephen and Henry, all of whom were taken into quarantine with Mary, but later released. It was reported that diseased rats had been observed in and around their home in Dowling Street, which was quite close to the rat infested wharves of Woolloomooloo.^(1,2,3)

The elder girl, Stella Patmore, was 10 years old when she died on 13 May, 1900, just a few weeks after Mary. She had lived with her parents Charlotte and Henry Patmore and sisters Myra and Irene, just up the road from her church school St. Francis of Assisi, in Gordon Street, Paddington. News of Stella's demise was published shortly after her death, followed by a further newspaper advertisement expressing the parent's heartfelt thanks to many, including Dr and Mrs Salter, Quarantine Station, Nurse Sherwood and Father Ignatius "for their kindness and condolences during the sad loss of their eldest daughter Stella". No such family announcement of little Mary's passing can be found though.^(1,4,6)

There are many things that these girls had in common - they both lived in Paddington, both died of bubonic disease, and both are buried in the Third Cemetery, though at quite a distance apart. Surprisingly, however, they also shared the same grandparents. Stella's mother Charlotte (née Rawlinson) was the daughter of Henry and Mary Rawlinson, and Mary's father, Charles, their son. They were in fact cousins, but there is a noticeable difference in their final resting places.⁽⁵⁾



Any marker that Mary's grave may have had is long gone and now covered by ESBS. Stella on the other hand, has a sturdy headstone with marble plaque and cement grave surround. Perhaps this disparity, and the apparent lack of a death notice for Mary suggests differing economic circumstances of each family, one struggling to make ends meet living near the docks in Dowling Street, whilst the other living more comfortably up the hill in Gordon Street.

*Dowling Street is now part of the suburb of Woolloomooloo.

(1) Museums of History NSW. (n.d.) <https://mhnsw.au/indexes/bubonic-plaque/bubonic-plaque-index/> Retrieved 15/04/2026

(2) Evening News Friday 6 April 1900 p.4 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/113713774/12085176> Retrieved 13/04/2026

(3) <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/113714271> Retrieved 11 May 2026; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/169865588>

(4) Sydney Morning Herald Sat 19 May 1900 p.1 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/14312472> Retrieved 13/04/2026

(5) Sydney Morning Herald Wed 10 December 1902 p.16 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/14488435> Catholic Press Thursday 29

April 1920 p.29 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/105974934> Retrieved 15/04/2026 [Ancestry.com family trees](https://www.ancestry.com/familytrees)

(6) Sydney Morning Herald Saturday 2 June 1900 p.1 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/14315376> Retrieved 13/04/2026