

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW PRE 1788-2007

**Pre 1788:** North Head is a special place for local Aboriginal people for gatherings and medicinal practices.

**1789-90:** Three Aboriginal men, Arabanoo, Bennelong and Colbee, are captured. The next year, Governor Phillip is speared during the feast of a stranded whale at Manly.

**1828-1879:** North Head begins to be used to quarantine passengers on ships arriving in the colony. By 1837 the whole of North Head is a quarantine reserve.

**1880s-1900s:** St. Patrick's Seminary is completed. First, second and third class quarters are built at the Quarantine Station. At Federation, the Commonwealth becomes responsible for quarantine and defence. New pavilions, fumigation facilities and quarters for non-Europeans are built.

**1928:** An ocean outfall sewer line is completed at Blue Fish Point.

**1933-36:** Parkhill Reserve opens, giving the public access to North Head. A year later it closes when fortifications are built for coastal artillery. The reserve later re-opens on land not required by Defence.

**1938:** The brick barracks complex is completed for the coastal artillery.

**WWII:** North Fort is an integral part of the harbour's defence system. It closes down in 1945.

**1946:** The School of Artillery is established in the barracks on North Head.

**1977-1984:** Nikki Maru is the last ship to be quarantined and the station closes down. Parkhill Reserve and the Quarantine Station become part of Sydney Harbour National Park.

**1990s:** The National Artillery Museum is established at North Fort. St. Patrick's Seminary becomes the International College of Management.

**1998:** The School of Artillery moves to Puckapunyal in Victoria.

**2001:** The Harbour Trust assumes responsibility for the former School of Artillery site.

**2007:** North Head Sanctuary opens to the public.

## The flora and fauna of North Head

The former School of Artillery site is home to a diverse array of flora and fauna. It survives today because North Head has always been isolated – used only for quarantine, church, defence and as a nature reserve and national park.

At any time of the year, you will find something flowering on North Head. Walk quietly and you might see some of the birds which feed on the rich supply of nectar or one of the headland's many lizards.

**Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*)** is the most common of the seven Banksias that grow on North Head. Its creamy flowers appear from summer to winter and attract birds.

**Heath Banksia (*Banksia ericifolia*)** grows well in the sandy soils on North Head. Like other Banksias, its cones were often hollowed out by Aboriginal people to carry fire coals.

**Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea resinifera*)** was very useful in traditional Aboriginal culture. The nectar from its flowers could be made into a sweet drink and the hard gum resin found at its base was used to repair spears and join tools to wood.

**Flannel Flower (*Actinotus helianthi*)** has grey-green foliage and elegant white flowers from spring to summer. Both the leaves and flowers have a flannel-like texture.

**Woolisia (*Woolisia pungens*)** is a prickly shrub which flowers in spring and has a strong sweet scent. The flowers are usually white, although sometimes they can be pink or purplish.

**Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*)** grows around Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Its flower heads consist of seven reddish flowers and its beaked and horned fruits give the plant its name.

**Coastal Tea-Tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*)** is the most common of the eight Tea-Tree species found on North Head. In many areas, tall thickets of Tea-Tree and Melaleuca dominate the scrub. Many of the smaller plants have not been able to germinate as it has been more than 50 years since a major fire on North Head.

**Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*)** – North Head is one of the few places in Sydney where these bandicoots still live. The bandicoots are mostly active at night when they dig in open ground for insects. You can see their footprints and signs of their diggings in the sand dunes and grassed areas.

**New Holland Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*)** is the most common bird on North Head. It rarely keeps still, darting from flower to flower. These birds are usually found in large groups.

**Little Wattlebird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*)** uses its long, brush-tipped tongue to probe deep into flowers to feed on nectar.

**Seabirds** – Several species of seabird travel past North Head, particularly when there's a south to south-easterly wind blowing.

**Black-bellied Swamp Snake (*Hemiaspis signata*)** grows to about one metre and is not venomous. It is mostly found around creeks or swamps and is usually active during the heat of the day, feeding on small lizards and frogs.

**Eastern Water Dragon (*Physignathus lesueurii*)** is a large lizard that lives around waterways in Sydney. It feeds on insects and aquatic organisms and can stay underwater for up to an hour.

**Common Eastern Froglet (*Crinia signifera*)** grows to about only 3cm but can still make a reasonably loud "crick-crick-crick" call.

**Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peronii*)** has a loud machine gun or pneumatic drill-like call. It can change its colour in seconds depending on temperature, light and moisture.

**Invertebrates** – There are 1,500 different invertebrates on North Head, including flies, ants, beetles, slaters, millipedes and ticks. This high number indicates that the soils are in good shape.

**Ticks** – When you leave, check your clothes and body for ticks. To remove a tick, use fine pointed tweezers and grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Gently pull it out with steady pressure. Do not try to kill the tick with methylated spirits or any other chemicals as this can make it inject more toxins.



Heath Banksia



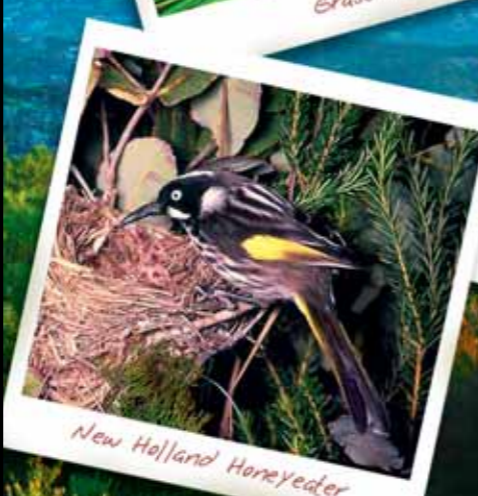
Long-nosed Bandicoot



Grass Tree



Flannel Flowers



New Holland Honeyeater



SANCTUARY

# NorthHead



The Gatehouse



North Head Sanctuary is open every day during daylight hours

The Gatehouse Visitor Centre is open 10am to 4pm except Christmas Day and Good Friday.

To book a guided tour: Phone (02) 8969 2100  
Visit [www.131500.info](http://www.131500.info) for public transport information.

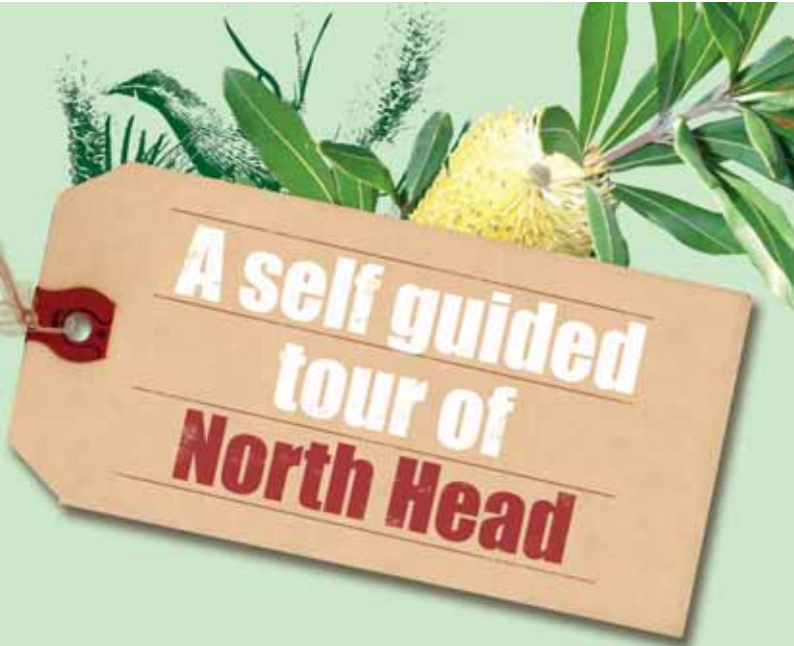
### Emergency Contacts

In case of emergency: dial 000 or 112 if mobile out of range.  
North Head Ranger: 0434 652 152 (8am – 4pm).  
Security: 0433 631 689 (4pm – 8am).

### Want to know more?

To find out about the Harbour Trust and North Head Sanctuary, contact us at:  
PO Box 607, Mosman NSW 2088  
Phone (02) 8969 2100 Fax (02) 8969 2120 [www.harbourtrust.gov.au](http://www.harbourtrust.gov.au)

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## North Head Sanctuary opened to the public in 2007.

Previously a School of Artillery where Army gunners lived and trained, the sanctuary now includes a visitor centre and walking tracks to explore.

The future of North Head Sanctuary lies in protecting the natural environment while adapting former military buildings for new uses that are sympathetic to the site and its history, such as for environmental research, education and recreation.

### Gunners' Walk

This walk takes from 1½ to 2 hours, passing by the former School of Artillery buildings and exploring much of the heathland. Highlights include the many flowering plants, diverse birdlife, military remnants and views of the city, harbour and ocean.

### Help Keep the Sanctuary Special

- **Respect the environment** – keep to the track and don't pick the flowers, leave them for everyone to enjoy.
- **Take all your rubbish with you** when you leave.
- Before entering the bush, **remove any soil or mud** from your shoes – it can spread weeds and plant diseases.
- **Don't smoke** on the bush tracks – nobody wants a bush fire.
- **Leave your pets at home** – they scare the native animals.
- **Obey the signs** and stay out of areas where you're not meant to go – there are numerous hazards and we don't want any injuries.
- Be careful of ticks, snakes and other things that bite!

We hope you enjoy exploring North Head Sanctuary with this self-guided tour.

Photos courtesy of:  
 Australian Museum; Australian War Museum; Biotrack;  
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 Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.



### 9. Third Quarantine Cemetery

There are over 240 burials in this cemetery, dating from 1881 to 1919. Most died from the bubonic plague and the influenza outbreak after WWI. Others were victims of smallpox and scarlet fever. This cemetery was placed well away from the Quarantine Station after it was found that the second quarantine cemetery was overcrowded and possibly draining into the station's water supply. As well as the graves, this cemetery preserves an important patch of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.



### 10. North Fort

This is now home to the National Artillery Museum which can be accessed via Scenic Drive. Guided tours are also available, contact the Museum for more details and opening hours: [www.northfort.org.au](http://www.northfort.org.au) or 9976 3855.

During WWII, North Head was one of the most heavily fortified sites in Australia. Heavy guns were placed here and at South Head to fire on enemy ships out to sea. The gunners who worked here, initially lived in tents and later in the barracks you passed earlier.



### 11. Observation Post

This was one of a network of observation posts up and down the coast. From here, enemy ships could be spotted. Their location was sent to the underground fortress plotting room where it was converted to gun data and sent on to the gun crews. Radar was later installed to more easily locate ships.

### 12. Avenue of Honour

This cobblestone avenue was created in 1928 as a memorial to local soldiers killed in WW1. Originally lined with Norfolk Island pines, it was intended to provide a circuit around the east of North Head, but the return section does not appear to have been completed.

### 13. Hanging Swamp

The rock that makes up North Head is sedimentary Hawkesbury Sandstone which has a hard outer surface. Water does not easily seep into this rock. After rain, water remains for a short time in shallow wetlands such as this one.



### 14. Obstacle Course

Physical training was an important aspect of Army training. The wall in this obstacle course was intended to encourage teamwork as several men were needed to get each soldier over the top.



### 8. City lookout

North Head is just 11 kilometres from the city of Sydney. The headland is surrounded by one of the richest estuaries in the world – Sydney Harbour. These waters are home to around 580 different species of fish and several underwater habitats.

### 7. Northern lookout

From here you can see a line of headlands along the Northern Beaches. In the foreground is St. Patrick's Seminary, built in 1879.

### 6. Precious scrub

North Head contains one of the few remaining patches of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. It includes Banksias, Grass Trees, Coastal Tea-Tree and other native shrubs. There used to be around 5,000 hectares of this type of scrub between North Head and Botany Bay, now less than 3% of this remains.



### 5. Gun Park

When you've got a lot of cars you need a car park. If you're the School of Artillery then you need a gun park. Up until the 1980s the Army conducted live firing out to sea from some areas of North Head. Increased shipping traffic and more public access to the headland led the School of Artillery to relocate to Puckapunyal in country Victoria in 1997.



### 4. Sergeants' Mess

When the Sergeants' Mess and other buildings were built for the coastal artillery in 1938, they were considered to be some of the finest military barracks in the country. The Sergeants' Mess includes a dining room, lounge, bar and pool room.



### 2. Parade Ground

It used to be that the Parade Ground could not be crossed except during official ceremonies and parades. Parade grounds are symbolic of when the dead were buried on the battleground and this ground became hallowed to both sides of combatants.

### 3. The Barracks

The main building in the Army complex, the barracks was at its busiest during the Vietnam War. As the demand for trained soldiers grew, the numbers per barrack room went from 6 to 12. The building houses a large mess hall where as many as 300 soldiers would eat their meals at any one time. Enlisted men had to collect their food whereas officers had stewards to serve them.



### 1. The Gatehouse

The Gatehouse at the entry to the Army base was guarded day and night. It was built in 1938 for the barracks of artillery men serving the guns at North Fort. It later became the main administration headquarters for the School of Artillery.

