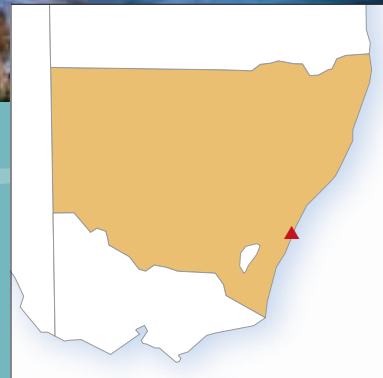


# North Head



Date of inscription: 12 May 2006

## North Head, Sydney, New South Wales

Since the time of European settlement in Australia, the towering sandstone cliffs of North Head have witnessed the arrival of a variety of ships sailing into Sydney Harbour.

North Head has long been recognised as the entrance to one of the world's most picturesque harbours, Port Jackson, and has been portrayed by artists such as Augustus Earle from as early as 1825.

In particular, the Manly headland marks the site where ships carrying passengers with infectious diseases were isolated; an important means of defence for an island-nation.

North Head was the first site in Australia to be used for quarantine purposes when the *Bussorah Merchant* was detained in Spring Cove in 1828. Its passengers were found to have both smallpox and whooping cough and were contained onboard the ship while the healthier voyagers were housed in tents on shore.

Soon afterward, in 1832, the whole area of North Head was set aside for a permanent quarantine station by order of the Governor of New South Wales. The move was in response to the cholera epidemic in Europe at the time, as authorities feared the disease gaining a foothold in the Australian colonies.

For almost 150 years North Head Quarantine Station helped protect Australia's island nation from disease.

Returning soldiers during both World Wars, prisoners of war, evacuees from Cyclone Tracy in 1974 and refugees from Vietnam in 1975 all passed through the station.

From its beginning until 1977 when the facility was closed, a total of 580 ships were detained and about 13 000 passengers, including generations of free immigrants, convicts and war veterans, were quarantined for periods of up to 40 days.

Like the Point Nepean Quarantine Station, the facility at North Head is situated in a strategically isolated location at the entrance to Port Jackson Harbour.

The major groups of buildings, although of a similar age as surviving complexes in other states, are rare in terms of their range and relative integrity. For instance,

the Superintendent's Residence at North Head, built in 1854, appears to be the earliest surviving, purpose-built, quarantine-related structure in Australia.

The layout of the station, including its buildings, roads, fences and cemeteries, was designed to separate the quarantined passengers on the grounds of health, as well as social and cultural background. For example, the first, second and third class passengers were separated into barracks-style accommodation in different areas.

Separate areas were also developed for Asians and in this respect North Head is an expression of the gradual implementation during the 1880s of the White-Australia Policy.

The station's facilities show how the area developed according to scientific responses to disease outbreaks. The smallpox epidemic of 1881, for example, resulted in new facilities such as a hospital, and stricter zoning by fences.

The Quarantine Station was added to the Sydney Harbour National Park in 1984. The facility is today used as a centre for events and conferences and as a tourist attraction.

