**BEECROFT OBSERVATORY**

**Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW: 1843 - 1893), Thursday 10 April 1890, page 7**

Photographing the Stars.

The Minister of Public Instruction has authorised the establishment of a temporary observatory on the reserve at the Field of Mars (says the Herald) with the object of testing the suitability of the site for the photographic work which has to be done in connection with the chart of the heavens now about to be made.

It is of the utmost importance that the photographs should be as perfect as possible, for they are meant to be a record of the stars, which last for ever, and serve as a means of detecting any changes that go on and it has been found in Europe that a Blight and almost invisible mist makes a surprising difference to photographs of stars, and it is therefore advisable to avoid the smoke cloud which is almost constantly over the city; and it is expected that the elevation of the proposed station at Pennant Hills, 615ft. above the sea, its distance from the city smoke, and greater distance from the sea, will secure for the photographic work a much purer atmosphere than can be found in the city. The experiments so far made show that Field of Mars is the best site within a moderate distance of the city.

**Cumberland Mercury (Parramatta, NSW: 1875 - 1895), Saturday 2 December 1893, page 3**

Beecroft.

CROWN LANDS RESERVE – FOR SALE.

In the Beecroft portion of the Field of Mars Common, between Beecroft and Pennant Hills, there is a portion of about 30 acres, commanding the highest point in the district, with magnificent views all round, which has been placed as a reserve. It is now advertised that above acres will be sold by auction on December 2, at 2 30 p.m., on the ground five acres are still reserved for an observatory. The query is, in case the surrounding land is sold and is built upon, would this particular site be suitable for an observatory station. Anyway, it is a beautiful site, and the sale will be well worth attending.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 13 May 1899, page 2**

PENNANT HILLS.

A New Observatory. - The Government Astronomer has acquired a piece of land, near the residence of Judge Fitzhardinge, upon which a new observatory is shortly to be erected. The land is now being fenced in for the purpose.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 20 May 1899, page 5**

The New Observatory at Pennant Hills.

Work in connection with the erection of the proposed observatory is progressing satisfactorily, and Mr. Russell pays frequent visits to the site selected. Passing that way our representative observed the Government astronomer and some friends, who were apparently amusing themselves with a little amateur pick and shovel work. It is understood that the building will be utilised for astronomical rather than meteorological purposes, it being hoped that the heavenly bodies may be studied at Pennant Hills without the interference of the smoke and vapour which, often impedes the work in Sydney.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Monday 22 May 1899, page 2**

OBSERVATORY AT PENNANT-HILLS.

The Government Astronomer visited the works in connection with the observatory at Pennant-hills last week, and expressed himself as being well satisfied with the site which has been obtained. It is close to the residence of Judge Fitzhardinge, on part of what is known as the trigonometrical station, and on the summit of Redhill, leading from Beecroft to the Pennant-Hills-road.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 29 July 1899, page 3**

Pennant Hills.

The Observatory. — The new buildings at the observatory are making rapid progress. The observatory proper seems to be almost ready for the reception of the astronomical instruments, and the framework of a residence has been erected hard by.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 10 February 1900, page 10**

The Observatory. - The new buildings, erected by the Government for astronomical observation, were completed some time ago, and a number of valuable scientific instruments have been brought thither from Sydney. Mr. Short, of the Sydney Observatory, is in charge, and is nightly engaged in photographing the heavens.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 18 November 1901, page 9**

PROPERTY SALES.

Messrs. Raine and Horne report that at their sale at Pennant Hills of the Observatory Hill subdivision they sold all the allotments at prices ranging from £24 to £40 per acre.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 24 May 1902, page 11**

Beecroft.

The Footpaths. — The condition of the footpaths throughout the district is disgraceful to all concerned in the government and maintenance of the roads. The footpath on the main road, from the residence of Judge Fitzhardinge to the Observatory, has been so hacked about that it is dangerous to traffic except in broad daylight After nightfall, people who know it walk warily, but strangers come to grief.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Thursday 17 July 1902, page 7**

PENNANT HILLS, Wednesday

Heavy rain fell last night at Beecroft and Pennant Hills with nice showers at Carlingford, Castle Hill, and Dural, and all fruit country hereabouts has been fairly watered. The rainfall registered at the Red Hill observatory since the 6th instant aggregates a total of 185 points.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 22 April 1905, page 10**

Beecroft.

LECTURE. - An interesting lecture, entitled “Charting the Heavens,” was delivered by Mr. C. Short, of the Pennant Hills Observatory, in the Beecroft School of Arts, on Monday night, under the auspices of the Literary and Debating Society. There was a large attendance, and the lecturer, who was listened to with wrapt attention, was accorded a very hearty vote of thanks.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 19 August 1905, page 10**

Beecroft.

PROGRESS ASSOCIATION. - Mr. C. C. Tucker presided at the Beecroft Progress Association on Tuesday. It was decided to write again to the Hon. B. B. O’Conor, asking him to use his best endeavours to secure, for recreation purposes, the Observatory Heights Reserve. The President was deputed to wait on Mr. O'Conor with regard to parks … for the district.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 18 November 1905, page 10**

Beecroft.

PROGRESS ASSOCIATION. - A special meeting of the Progress Association was held on Tuesday evening. Mr. C. C. Tucker, the president, was in the chair, and there was a good attendance of members. A communication was also read from the Minister for Education, granting part of the Observatory grounds as a public recreation reserve on certain conditions. The question as to whether the reserve would be accepted under these conditions was held over for future consideration. It was decided to write to Mr. Oliver, the chief Railway Commissioner, congratulating him upon his having acquired the title of C.M.G.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 August 1906, page 7**

THE LUNAR ECLIPSE.

There was a total eclipse of the moon on Saturday night, but unfortunately the phenomenon was spoilt owing to heavy clouds obscuring the moon.

At the Redhill branch of the Observatory, where astrographic work is done, the operator secured several pictures during the slight intervals in which the moon appeared clear from the clouds, and also at the termination of the eclipse, when the sky was fairly clear.

**Australian Star (Sydney, NSW: 1887 - 1909), Saturday 23 March 1907, page 7**

GIACOBINI'S COMET.

Glacobini's comet, a very faint object, and likely to be lost to view with the increasing moonlight, has been observed at the Red-Hill branch of the Sydney Observatory, on

the evenings of March 21 and 22. It has a slight condensation of nucleus, and is about 10th magnitude— a most difficult object to observe. With the least Illumination of the wires of the micrometer it disappears from view. The practised eye of the observer Is necessary to detect It. The Position last night (22nd) was R.A. 6hr. 48mln. 58csec., and declination south 6deg. 42min. 0sec. The Sydney Observatory have failed to locale the position of this object with the 11 ¼ inches equatorial telescope, and can only account for It being seen by the observer at Red Hill by the atmosphere being much clearer there than at Sydney.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Monday 8 April 1907, page 4**

THE OBSERVATORY.

The Premier adheres to the arrangements to place the Mint on the line site known as Observatory-hill. At the same time, he says, he is endeavouring to come to an understanding with the Mint authorities whereby permission shall be granted for the continuance of such meteorological observations as are necessary for the preservation of normals. This is not a very big question, In Mr. Carruthers' view, but it will enable meteorological observations which have been going for years to be continued. 'The observatory is to go to the Redhill site on the Field of Mars.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Friday 12 April 1907, page 4**

ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY.

The Minister for Public Instruction has received a memorial from the New South Wales branch of the British Astronomical Association, which was presented by Mr. Fell, M.L.A. The

memorial is in support of the proposal to move the Astronomical Observatory to a position outside the boundaries of the city. It is pointed out in the document that the site for an observatory for astronomical purposes should be out of the glare of the incandescent and electric lights of the city, and should be free from dust and smoke. A general support is given to the proposal for the location of the Observatory at Red-hill.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Saturday 13 April 1907, page 8**

SYDNEY OBSERVATORY.

Mr. Allan B. Cobham, secretary of the New South Wales branch of the British Astronomical Association, writes: — On behalf of the council of this association I desire to point out that

the purport of your paragraph in yesterday's paper, under this heading, is scarcely in accordance with the recommendations of our memorial referred to. Briefly, we concurred with the Government in the proposed removal from Flag-staff-hill, but we desired to point out that the Red-hill site, now occupied by the Astrographic Department, is also equally undesirable, not so much from atmospheric hindrances, but rather, from the disturbing elements due to proximity to settlement, to the railway, to motors on the main adjoining road, and lastly, to the insufficient acreage of this site. The council, however, pointed out that some of the more elevated Crown lands, some two miles north of the Red-hill Observatory, and about a mile west of Hornsby, may prove much more suitable for the increasing demands of modern astronomical research.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Wednesday 17 April 1907, page 2**

PENNANT HILLS OBSERVATORY SITE.

The committee recently appointed by the Minister for Public Instruction to select a site more suitable than that at Redhill for the purposes of an Observatory met on Saturday morning and explored a large tract of country. The members of the committee present were

Mr. H. A. Lenehan, Government Astronomer; Mr. Joseph Brooks, F.R.A.S.; Mr. Vernon, Government Architect; Mr. W. J. McDonnell. F.R.A.S.; Mr. Raymond. F.R.A.S.; and Mr. Merfield, F.R.A.S.; and the committee were, accompanied by several visitors, including the Rev. Dr. Roseby, F.R.A.S.; Mr. J. D. Hirst, F.R.A.S. and Mr. J. W. Short, the astronomical photographer, who is in charge of the Redhill branch of the Observatory. Subject to the approval of the Minister, a new site was selected, known as Pogson's Trigonometrical Station, which is situated about 702 feet above sea level. The area of the land in question is about 15 to 20 acres, and the only difficulties which presented themselves, and which may be easily overcome, were the want of a roadway to either Hornsby or Thornleigh railway stations, and the absence of an adequate water supply. Pogson's site, the committee report, meets all the requirements for an Observatory, the atmosphere being particularly clear, and the view uninterrupted.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Wednesday 1 December 1909, page 11**

HALLEY'S COMET.

SEEN LAST NIGHT.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT RED-HILL.

Mr. W. E. Raymond, officer in charge of the Sydney Observatory, reported last night that Halley's comet was picked up by him with the 11½ inch refractor, at about 10.30 p.m. standard time. It was observed through flying masses of cloud, and when discovered was about as bright as a 12½ magnitude star.

Owing to the clouds, its position could not be measured from a corresponding star, but by the circles its right ascension was, approximately, 4 hours 34 minutes 43 seconds, and its declination west, 15 degrees 58 minutes. Mr. Short also reports that he succeeded in photographing the comet at the Red-Hill Observatory last night.

**National Advocate (Bathurst, NSW: 1889 - 1954), Friday 27 May 1910, page 2**

SUDDEN DEATH.

MILTHORPE, Thursday.

A sad death occurred here; a lady named Mrs. Short dying suddenly from heart failure. Deceased, who was staying at the private hospital, was the wife of Mr. Short, principal of the Beecroft Observatory, who has only just returned from Tasmania as a member of the astronomical expedition, which went there to take observations of the eclipse of the sun.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 28 May 1910, page 8**

Beecroft.

DEATH. - Mrs. Short, wife of Mr. J. Short, of the Observatory, Beecroft, who was on a short visit to Millthorpe, died suddenly there on Saturday, from heart failure. Much sympathy is expressed throughout the district with the bereaved husband and two children. Mr. Short, who is principal of the Beecroft Observatory, had only recently returned from Tasmania, where he was a member of the astronomical expedition to observe the. eclipse of the sun.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Tuesday 17 May 1910, page 4**

THE METEOR.

Mr. R. S. Whiteman, of Beecroft, in a communication addressed to Mr. W. E. Raymond, officer in charge of the Sydney Observatory, says: -

"A very large meteor passed over here last night (May 10), at 8.45 p.m., in a direction approximately south-east to north-west. It commenced in about the constellation Scorpio and disappeared near Canis Minor. Altogether its path measured roughly 130 degrees of the celestial sphere. In magnitude it was near that of Jupiter, and left a tail trailing about 20 degrees long. No noise accompanied it.”

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 25 June 1910, page 8**

Epping.

LECTURE. - Mr. Short, of the Observatory, Beecroft, is to deliver a lecture on astronomy, in the Epping School of Arts, about the middle of next month.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Saturday 22 June 1912, page 11**

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION.

Red-hill Observatory. - Erection of house for photo-heliography.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883 - 1930), Friday 17 October 1913, page 9**

OBSERVATORY HILL.

STATE TO RESUME POSSESSION.

WEATHER DEPARTMENT TOLD TO QUIT.

The State Government has decided to resume full possession of Observatory hill the buildings in which are at present housed the Observatory (which is a State department) and the Meteorological Bureau (which is now under the control of the Federal Government).

Some years ago, it will be recollected, it was proposed by the Carruthers Government to remove the Observatory to Pennant-hills, and put Observatory-hill to other public uses; but the scheme fell through. The present Government, it is understood, had inquiries made as to the Pennant-hills site, which is considered unsuitable, and when the time came for the Observatory to make a move from its present site, it will in all probability go out to Woollahra, where a good site is said to be obtainable, removed from the influences of the sea-air and smoke, which are detrimental to observatory work. The Commonwealth will not be asked to remove its Weather Bureau before the end of the year.

**Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876 - 1954), Monday 8 July 1918, page 3**

NOVA AQUILAE.

BIRTH OF A NEW SYSTEM

At the last meeting of the New South Wales branch of the Royal Astronomical Society the principal subject for discussion was the new "Star," Nova Aquilae, which burst into great brilliancy, without warning.

The spectroscope, in the hands of Professor Cooke and Messrs. W. F. Gale, and G. H. Hoskins, revealed the fact that the star's brilliancy was due to an outburst of incandescent gases, caused by a collision in the depths of space with another dark star, or a nebulae. It was stated that the latter seemed to be the case, inferred from the identification of nebulum in its spectrum. This gas was generally found in the spectra of nebulae. The lines of hydrogen were very strong, also a bright line in the violet end of the spectrum, most probably calcium. Helium was also suspected, and two lines, as yet, not identified. From the position of the lines in the spectrum it was inferred that the star is receding; but at what rate of speed it was impossible to say. As there is no Astro-physical Observatory in Australia, it will be necessary to wait for details from Greenwich or Harvard University, where Professor Pickering has the appliances to deal with celestial physics. Mr. W. F. Gale said the spectrum of the star was most complex and interesting. It was fading, as is usual with this type of star, and was now 3.2 magnitude. He illustrated his remarks by photograph on the screen, amongst them being one of the stranger, taken by Mr. Hoskins, at Beecroft, with his 18in. mirror, which showed very clearly the lines in the spectrum. Mr. Gale stated that we were doubtless witnessing the birth of a new system, some dark or dying sun had

collided with some other body in space, and had entered into a new existence. Nothing

was ever lost in Nature. – “'S. M. Herald.”

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 7 September 1918, page 8**

THE STAR AND THE LAMP.

Mr. W. E. Cooke, Government astronomer at the Redhill Observatory, Beecroft, is carrying out certain research work on the new star Nova Aquilae. His work has been interfered with by the fact, that one of the street lamps to the east of the observatory shines directly into the telescope when it points to the star, and the light fogs the photographic plates. He called Hornsby Council's attention to this drawback, and requested that body to make that side of the lamp opaque. The council decided to reply that they would have no objection to Mr. Cooke pasting a sheet of brown paper or cardboard inside the lamp on that side.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 19 July 1919, page 8**

BEECROFT.

Mr. J. Short, F.R.A.S., of the Red Hill Observatory, Beecroft, delivered a very interesting lecture on Monday, the subject being “The Heavens Above.” The lecturer displayed a number of extremely fine photographic views of the heavenly bodies.



IN THE OBSERVATORY AT GOONDIWINDI. This shows the bottom end of the big telescope camera (astrograph) belonging to Sydney Observatory, which was moved from Pennant Hills for the eclipse. Mr. Short (on the left), photographer of the Observatory, is, with Professor Cooke, putting a plate in the slide.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Friday 20 November 1925, page 13**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir, - Mr. J. J. Richardson, in his lecture given on astronomy at the Mosman Anzac Memorial Hall, makes an Incontestable, statement when he says: "The pursuit of pure science was as much an index of the intellectual development of any nation as art and music." The closing of our observatory does not speak well for our "Intellectual development.”

W. J. Burnett.

Beecroft, Nov. 18.

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Monday 23 November 1925, page 11**

Pennant Hills Wants a Park

The Pennant Hills Citizens Association wants the local observatory site turned into a park when the observatory is closed.

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Thursday 17 July 1930, page 11**

OBSERVATORY SITE For Recreation Ground Hornsby Shire Council is desirous of securing the old observatory site at Pennant Hills for recreation purposes. The land is vested in the Department of Education, and in view of the possible requirement of the land at some time for school purposes, the department is reluctant to part with it. An offer has been made to the shire of a permissive occupancy with a tenure from year to year. Major J. B. Shand, M.L.A., has been interesting himself in the matter, and he is to be asked to introduce a deputation to the Minister with a view to securing occupancy for a period of ten years. and thereafter as per the requirements of the Department of Education.

**Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW: 1876 - 1954), Saturday 12 March 1932, page 8**

MAN'S ESCAPE.

Fell From Moving Train.

SYDNEY, Friday.

Falling between a train and the No. 17 platform at tile Central Railway Station this morning, James Short, 56, of the Pennant Hills Observatory. He was dragged for several yards before the train was stopped. He escaped with lacerations to the legs and shock. Short was about to alight from the train when several women boarded the carriage. He stood aside to let them pass, but by the time they had entered the train had begun to move out. Short jumped off, but slipped and fell between the train and the platform. He grasped an iron support as he fell, and kept himself from going under the wheels.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Saturday 3 September 1932, page 20**

AUCTION SALE.

DEMOLITION AND REMOVAL.

Premises known as "Redhill Observatory."

On the Site,

Corner of Pennant Hills and Beecroft roads,

Pennant Hills.

THIS DAY, SATURDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1932,

AT 11 O’CLOCK.

Lot 1. – One large Round Galvanised Iron Building, Wunderlich metal lines.

2. - Fibro and Weatherboard Building, galvanised iron roof. 13 x 12.

3. - One Weatherboard Building. 24 X 9 feet 6 Inches, galvanised Iron roof, wood lined, comprising kitchen and offices.

4. - Large Weatherboard Cottage. wood lined, roof of galvanised iron, comprising 5 rooms,

hall, front verandah.

5. - Fibro and Weatherboard Building, Ruberoid roof. 15 x 12.

6. - Quantity of Fencing.

TERMS CASH.

R. T. Forsyth Ltd. Auctioneers and Real Estate Agents. 236 Penshurst-street. Willoughby.

J1145 and J1254.

(H.8256)

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Thursday 5 January 1933, page 8**

ASTRONOMY.

Phenomena and Discoveries

of 1932.

AN EXPANDING COSMOS.

The astrograph (photographic telescope) was removed during the year from Pennant Hills to Observatory Hill, after an absence of 30 years. It is interesting to recall that when it was decided to take the instrument to Pennant Hills, then considered to be in the "bush," the reason given was that the atmosphere in the city was unsuitable, because of large volumes of smoke from factory chimneys. Today, with the advent of electric power, that disability has been removed, whilst Pennant Hills is no longer suitable, because the atmospheric conditions have been ruined by dust raised by motor cars, and the blaze of headlights.

**Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Wednesday 23 June 1943, page 12**

DEATHS

SHORT. - June 21, at his residence, Boundary Road, Pennant Hills, James, dearly loved husband of Fredrica and dear father of Graham, Ron (deceased, R.A.A.F.), and Russell (R.A.A.F.). At rest. No flowers, by request.

**N.S.W. Births Deaths & Marriages**

Marriage 1901 – James Short & Emma M. E. Hansen, Balmain North

Death 1910 – Emma M. E. Short, parents: Frederick & Mary, Millthorpe

Birth 1904 - Graham G. Short, parents: James & Emma, Balmain North

Marriage 1911 – James Short & Frederica Cochrane, Sydney

Children:

1913 – Ronald, Chatswood

1917 – Russell, Chatswood

Death 1943 – James Short, parents: William & Jessie, Hornsby

Death 1983 – Freda May Short, died Hornsby

**Regeneration of Observatory Park Red Hill, Pennant Hills.**

***A Good Start.***

A triangular block of forested land situated at the junction of Beecroft Rd and Pennant Hills Rd has been noted on the earliest maps of the district as “Red Hill (good soil)”. This 5-acre (2.2 hectare) block is on a high rainfall, ridge top vein of volcanic soil with a high iron content which lends it its characteristic red colour. This deep deposit of Wianamatta Shale soil was perfect to support its cover of Sydney Blue Gum High Forest.

***What Happened Next.***

During the subdivision of the area in 1886 this block was set aside as a reserve for public use and an observatory was established in 1890 at the eastern end to map the southern skies. Thus the reserve gained its name “Observatory Park Red Hill”. The observatory, operated by astronomer James Short, was demolished in 1932 upon completion of its important work.

An army transit camp was established in the park during World War Two and the undergrowth was cleared for a bivouac and military vehicle access and only the tall trees remained. 1953 saw the zoning of the park for Public Recreation and subsequently Hornsby Council undertook the maintenance of the park and commenced mowing around the trees. The park was used for fetes, fairs and other fund-raising activities with car access and parking and a brick toilet block built in 1966. Mowing continued until 1988.

***Regeneration Starts.***

Council agreed in 1988 to set aside a central section of approximately a hectare (identified by large yellow dots painted on selected trees) for mowing to cease and regeneration to commence. At that time a survey of native plants in the area revealed a count of 46 species including the trees.

John Noble, a Beecroft resident, undertook the removal by hand of weeds in this area in a chessboard fashion and many more species emerged. Wooden bollards were placed around the regeneration area to clearly define the boundaries and prevent the frequent incursions by mowing contractors. By 1994 more than 100 different species had been identified. In 1997 the NSW Scientific Committee recognised the park as Sydney Blue Gum High Forest and listed it as an endangered Ecological Community under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

***Regeneration Continues.***

John Noble in 1998, then in his eighties, realised he was no longer physically capable to work alone and asked for volunteers to help. In February 1999 a team of volunteers commenced working one day per month and took over. In January 2000 the regeneration was virtually doubled in size and the toilet bock was subsequently demolished. Today, 10 years later, more than 120 species of native plants have returned, and now weed removal is almost at maintenance level.

***What Now?***

After 13 years of abuse, 34 years of owing and 21 years of regeneration Observatory Park has returned to its original state of Sydney Blue Gum High Forest.

Regeneration continues …… Ron Leslie. July 2009

With thanks to John Noble’s book “Red Hill Observatory Park – its history and regeneration.”

**Regeneration of Observatory Park.**

Observatory Park is situated on Red Hill so named because of the rich, red shale soil of the area.

The original natural vegetation comprised Sydney Blue Gum High Forest, a feature of the high ridge-tops of northern Sydney. High rainfall and rich soil supported this tall forest and ecological community. However less than 1% remains as clearing took place for logging and development.

Despite the establishment of an observatory at the eastern end of the park in the late 19th century and an army camp set up during World War II, the tall trees were retained and the under-storey was kept mown for decades. The Park was placed under management of Hornsby Shire Council and was zoned for Public Recreation in 1953.

John Francis Noble, a retired engineer and resident of Beecroft, approached Council in 1988 to seek permission to undertake regeneration of approximately one hectare in the middle of the park. Work commenced early 1989 and mowing was restricted to areas outside the designated regeneration area. Working single-handedly John removed weeds with painstaking care to allow native species to re-emerge for the original forest seed-bed.

Initially there were only 45 recorded plant species in the park, now there are over 116 after 15 years of natural and assisted regeneration. A young under-storey, including replacement tree saplings, has now been firmly established. This will preserve the forest for future generations.

John Noble’s vision and dedication has restored this mown park to a healthy forest. It has come time that John retired from this project, however his hard work and dedication is being continued by other Bushcare volunteers.

The forest in Observatory Park has been recognised by the NSW Scientific Committee as Sydney Blue Gum High Forest and is an Endangered Ecological Community under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

For further information “Red Hill Observatory Park: Its History and Regeneration” by John F. Noble, is located at local Hornsby and Pennant Hills Libraries

Restoration of the Observatory Park bush has been supported through: Pennant Hills District Civic Trust Inc., Beecroft-Cheltenham Civic Trust Incorporated, Hornsby Bushcare, & Hornsby Shire Council

August 2004