



Community Acquisition proposal to National Parks and Wildlife Service for Glenlee to be made part of the Georges River National Park

The Friends of Glenlee Inc strongly supports the decision of Georges River Council that National Parks and Wildlife Service acquire the property known as Glenlee at 80 Boronia Parade, Lugarno as a new addition to the Georges River National Park. We also support the letter from Oatley Flora and Fauna (OFF).

On 27 July 2026, Georges River Councillors unanimously carried the following resolution:

That the General Manager: (a) Submits a Community Acquisition Proposal to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for "Glenlee", 80 Boronia Pd, Lugarno, to be assessed for acquisition and potential inclusion into the NSW national parks system; and (b) Writes to community organisations such as Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society and Friends of Glenlee to encourage them to lodge their own submissions with the NPWS in support of Council's Community Acquisition Proposal.

There are already sections of national park in Lugarno, along the foreshores of the river, and Glenlee would make a suitable addition to these and the areas of national park across the river.

Friends of Glenlee is an association formed in 2021 following the lodgement of a DA for the subdivision of the property known as Glenlee into 31 housing lots. The objects of our association were to oppose the proposed DA and to lobby the various levels of government to purchase and preserve Glenlee. This DA was defeated. The association continues to advocate for the preservation of Glenlee and to campaign against proposed destructive development. Following the 2021 DA, there was a considerable outcry from the community for the local and/or state government to preserve and protect the site by purchasing the property for community use. Both levels of government outlined their support for the retention of Glenlee in public hands but both claimed they did not have the resources to purchase the site. In April 2024, Glenlee was sold to a private purchaser, and we understand a further full DA is imminent. Development of the site would be an enormous loss not just to the Lugarno community but to NSW overall and we urge NPWS to seriously consider what an amazing addition Glenlee would make to the Georges River National Park.

Glenlee's inclusion in the Georges River National Park would protect and conserve its unique biodiversity. Because it remained undeveloped for well over 100 years, its variety of habitats, ecological communities and processes have been able to develop. The unique group of plants, animals and microorganisms interact within the largely undisturbed space

As part of the Georges River National Park, it would preserve significant State history. The formal acquisition and conversion of the historic Glenlee precinct into a dedicated National Park represents a rare, non-recurring opportunity to secure one of the region's most ecologically vital natural landscapes. Situated along a rapidly expanding urban corridor, Glenlee acts as a critical sanctuary for biodiversity. Securing this land under state protection will safeguard threatened

flora and fauna communities, protect high-value wildlife corridors, and ensure long-term ecosystem resilience against surrounding suburban development.

The NPWS has outlined nineteen criteria it uses to help assess the suitability of land for a national park. We believe that Glenlee meets most of them. The following outlines this assessment:

* **the potential to improve the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of the national parks system**

Glenlee's 2.5 hectares can well be seen as a missing piece of the puzzle connecting parts of the Georges River National Park along the river foreshores. As a national park it would add to the greenspace and passive recreation in this urban area as well as preserving the heritage of Glenlee.

Glenlee's significant heritage stretches beyond its boundaries. It is one of three heritage properties, which were granted in 1856 by Governor William Thomas Denison. The grant to Thomas Lee became known as the Glenlee Estate and the other, to Johann Peter Henning, eventually became the Heinrich Estate. The third property, now known as the Hermitage, was originally part of Glenlee. All three of these homes have been heritage listed by Georges River Council and form a rare precinct providing a snapshot into life in NSW from the later 1800s to the 1900s.

Both the Heinrich house and the Hermitage have been extensively renovated, and Glenlee remains the least developed example of early settler history and Aboriginal cultural heritage and is therefore of invaluable and irreplaceable significance within the precinct.

* **threatened species, populations or ecological communities**

Glenlee contains irreplaceable remnants of Critically Endangered Ecological Communities, most notably Cumberland Plain Woodland and River-Flat Eucalypt Forest. With less than 10% of original Cumberland Plain Woodland remaining intact across the Sydney Basin, Glenlee's healthy canopy and understorey represent a vital biological reservoir. These vegetation communities support a large number of native plant species, providing crucial seed banks, important soil fungal networks, and structural diversity that cannot be replicated or relocated once lost. There are more than 200 trees on the site, some over 100 years old, and they provide the hollows, cracks and crevices essential for birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates to roost, reside and rest.

The endangered ecological community of Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest (*Casuarina glauca* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia*) occurs on the Glenlee property and also on the adjacent Heinrichs Reserve.

Species listed as Vulnerable under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (2016) and recorded at the site (2021) are: greater broad-nosed bat, large bent-winged bat, eastern cave bat. The species listed as Vulnerable and determined to have suitable habitat and likely to occur (2021): white-bellied sea eagle, eastern osprey, little lorikeet, powerful owl, varied sittella, grey-headed flying-fox, eastern coastal free-tailed bat, southern myotis and the white-throated needletail (listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*).

Australia is recognised as having the highest mammal extinction rate in the world. Glenlee has at least 12 vulnerable species that need protection, including the powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*), eastern osprey (*Pandion cristatus*), white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) and micro bats. Inclusion in the Georges River National Park would protect and preserve these species.

* **critical habitat value such as priority koala habitat under the NSW Koala Strategy**

As outlined above, Glenlee, as a green space reserve in suburbia has immense habitat value. Both in its tree canopy and understorey, it provides a space for vulnerable species and other fauna to shelter and survive on the banks of the Georges River.

Beyond its botanical significance, Glenlee serves as a key movement artery for vulnerable native fauna. Furthermore, the site's old-growth trees, natural hollows, and intact riparian zones provide essential nesting, foraging, and roosting habitat for a wide variety of native species, including:

- **Mammals:** echidna, possums, the grey-headed glyding-fox and vulnerable microbat species (e.g. the large-eared pied bat).
- **Avifauna:** powerful owl, tawny frogmouth, eastern osprey, white-bellied sea eagle
- **Reptiles & Amphibians:** Local frog and turtle populations reliant on protected freshwater catchments.

Without formal reserve status, these animals face habitat fragmentation, territorial isolation, and heightened risk from suburban edge effects.

The 2021 Travers report also recorded additional microbat species which are not listed as Vulnerable: eastern broad-nosed bat, eastern forest bat and Gould's wattled bat.

Over January 2022, additional microbat monitoring by Corymbia Ecology (report can be provided) recorded the Vulnerable eastern coastal free-tailed bat on site. Importantly, *Micronomus norfolkensis*, which is also listed as vulnerable, was found likely to occur.

* **importance for ecosystem function, catchment protection or landscape connectivity**

As development accelerates in Sydney, intact bushland is shrinking at an unprecedented rate. Converting Glenlee into a national park transitions high-vulnerability land into a permanent ecological sanctuary. State ownership guarantees conservation-focused management, enabling systematic invasive weed control, feral predator management, and tailored fire regimes necessary to maintain biodiversity.

Acquiring Glenlee as a national park is an urgent and necessary investment in ecological preservation. Protecting this property secures an irreplaceable green link, protects endangered plant communities, and guarantees a viable sanctuary for iconic native wildlife for generations to come. The site also has a connection with the First Fleet that is not widely known and conferring National Park status would ensure that this significant history remains visible and accessible to the public (see below).

* **migratory routes and corridors, refuge, roosting sites, breeding sites and caves**

Glenlee is a vital part of the wildlife corridor stretching from Oatley, through Lugarno to the Georges River National Park providing safe passage and habitat for a wide range of wildlife.

The property occupies a prominent position on the shores of the Georges River and is immediately adjacent to mangrove forest and intertidal mudflats that provide important habitat for migratory and threatened shorebird species. It also forms part of a continuous forested foreshore corridor extending from Oatley, through Oatley Park, Lugarno and Salt Pan Creek, to the Georges River National Park.

* **vegetation communities, their protection status and current representation in the national parks system**

The vegetation communities found to occur (Travers Bushfire & Ecology, 2021) are PCT 1789 - Smooth-barked Apple - Blackbutt - Red Bloodwood open forest in enriched sandstone gullies of the western Woronora plateau and PCT 920 – Mangrove Forests in estuaries of the Sydney Basin Bioregion and Southeast Corner Bioregion.

PCT 1789 was found to contain a canopy of *Eucalyptus pilularis*, *Angophora costata*, *E. punctata*, *Corymbia gummifera* and *E. piperita* providing 30–50% project foliage cover (PFC). Mid-storey species include *Banksia serrata*, *Allocasuarina litoralis*, *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, *Elaeocarpus reticularis*, *Notelaea longifolia*, *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, *Persoonia linearis*, *Bauera rubioides*, *Polyscias sambucifolia*, *Eustrephus latifolius*, *Smilax glycyphylla* and *Banksia spinulosa* providing 10–15% PFC. Ground layer species include *Lomandra longifolia*, *Imperata cylindrica*, *Pomax umbellata*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Echinopogon caespitosus*, *Eustrephus latifolius* and *Lindsaea linearis* providing 40–60% PFC.

PCT 920 - Mangrove Forests in estuaries of the Sydney Basin Bioregion and South East Corner Bioregion was found to contain *Avicennia marina* subsp. *australasica* to a PCT of c.40%.

The Travers Bushfire & Ecology report incorrectly assessed the connectivity features of the property as poor. The property has good connectivity, as it is immediately connected to the Georges River riverine corridor and to Heinrichs Reserve to the north. The 2021 report failed to correctly record habitat types, including all hollow-bearing trees.

*** aquatic ecosystems (rivers and wetlands)**

Glenlee stretches down to the Georges River at Boggywell Creek. Glenlee's foreshores contain some of our most important bushland and wildlife habitat. The riparian areas are vital ecological powerhouses, stabilising riverbanks, acting as natural biofilters, and providing shelter, food and breeding ground for land-based and water-dependent fauna.

Glenlee also acts as a rain garden, absorbing stormwater from surrounding streets and channelling it to the river. The dense vegetation on Glenlee acts as a filter for water run off down its north-eastern slope.

If clearing of the vegetation on Glenlee was to take place for development there would be a serious threat of pollution to Boggywell Creek and water in Jewfish Bay, which feeds into the Georges River.

*** cultural heritage sites and objects of significance**

Glenlee has been listed by the National Trust for its significant Early Settler History and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. It contains well-preserved evidence of Aboriginal life on the site and is also listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System.

According to a report by GML Heritage, commissioned by Georges River Council in 2021, Glenlee is a rare heritage property in New South Wales because it was owned by the same family, the Matthei family, for 110 years and because it remains largely undeveloped and intact both in its built environment and in the remnant forest it has preserved since settlement.

The forest is one of two archaeologically significant zones on Glenlee, holding valuable information about the heritage of the Bidjigal people of the Eora nation. According to the journals of Philip Gidley King, an officer aboard the First Fleet, the first major social exchanges between the British and the Eora occurred at the head of Lime Kiln Bay on the Lugarno peninsula in 1788, so the site has high potential for additional historical

significance. [See Robert Haworth, 'The Several "Discoveries" of Sydney's Georges River: Precursors to the Tom Thumb Expedition', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 14, 2012.]

According to the GML Heritage report:

'Glenlee is part of the Aboriginal cultural landscape, with a representative range of Aboriginal archaeological sites, set within a semi-intact set of landforms. Parts of the site retain intact vegetation, landforms, soils and a creek line with a regular source of fresh running water. Within these landforms and the creek is evidence for past Aboriginal cultural practices. Midden material is present on a broad, flat landform above the steep rises from the river, and provides evidence for local Aboriginal subsistence practices, with deep deposits of shellfish remains ... Study of these could provide new information for middle to late Holocene Aboriginal economic practices across this part of the Georges River, which could be contrasted with those closer to the coast.

'The site is important to the local Aboriginal community today for its illustration of past cultural traditions, and was possibly a women's place; and as part of the broader river landscape that is emblematic of more recent First Nations and shared heritage. Themes include national history, identity, resistance, and social and cultural action' (pp. ii – iii).

And further:

'The natural creekline through the Matthei property has Aboriginal grinding grooves in the sandstone of the creekbed and [a] "pot hole" in the sandstone beside the creek is believed to have been constructed by the Aboriginal people to store water and, using fire-heated rocks, to warm food' (p.114).

Glenlee, as it still is today, is one of the few remaining examples of early-European riverside settlement in Sydney that is largely intact. The century-old homestead, and hand-hewn steps, paths and walls leading down to the boat sheds and jetty, retain the character of riverside life in the early 1900s. The surviving 110-year-old organic vegetable garden and mixed orchard are evidence of the self-sufficiency of our early settlers, who were largely sustained by what they grew and caught for themselves.

The river provided both livelihood and transport. The family became fishers and oyster-farmers and were significant in the development of the oyster-farming industry on the Georges River. The river was their connection to the city as well as their lifeline for supplies. Everything they needed from the outside world had to come across the river from Como.

The biodiversity and assessment report (2021) by Travers, Bushfire & Ecology was undertaken in support of a previous development application. Later surveys have contributed additional information. However, to this date there is no comprehensive evaluation of the biodiversity values of Glenlee.

* **geological and/or geomorphological importance**

Glenlee holds notable geological, geomorphological, and geo-archaeological significance within the Georges River catchment.

Because the 2.5-hectare waterfront estate remained in private hands without being subdivided or mass-excavated, it serves as a rare, largely intact window into the natural Hawkesbury Sandstone landscape of Sydney.

Key Geological & Geomorphological Highlights

1. Hawkesbury Sandstone Formations & Rock Features

- **Natural Bedrock Outcrops:** The site features exposed Hawkesbury Sandstone rock platforms, overhangs, and outcrops that step down toward the Georges River.
- **Indigenous Modification:** The sandstone surfaces preserve significant Aboriginal heritage features created using the natural geology, including axe-grinding grooves, a carved rock bowl, and rock engravings embedded into the stone platforms.

2. Natural Hydrology & Micro-Canyon Creek

- **Groundwater & Springs:** A natural freshwater creek runs through a southwest-to-northeast corridor on the property, fed by local sandstone aquifers and a ground water hole/well.
- **Erosion Landforms:** As the topography drops sharply toward the river, the watercourse cuts through block sandstone, creating miniature sandstone escarpments, rock basins, and small waterfalls.

3. Intact Soil Stratigraphy & Carbon-Rich Matrices

- **Undisturbed Soil Profile:** Unlike surrounding suburban Lugarno—where modern building standardizes and flattens land—Glenlee preserves a natural, unexcavated soil profile.
- **Geo-Archaeological Shell Middens:** On the elevated flat sandstone plateau above the river, there are deep carbon-rich soil matrices containing Bidjigal (Eora Nation) shellfish middens, preserving organic and mineral stratigraphy spanning thousands of years.

4. Foreshore River Topography

- **Sandstone Plateau to Tidal River:** The site displays a full cross-section of the local coastal riverine landscape: a flat central plateau falling steeply into sandstone drops and down to tidal riverbanks.
- **Ecological & Geomorphic Buffer:** It acts as an intact geological corridor connecting Oatley Park to the Georges River National Park, protecting the estuarine shore from erosion and runoff.

* **exceptional visual quality or protection of visual amenity**

Glenlee is an important greenspace on the Georges River. Its visual quality from Oatley Park and other areas on the river make maintenance of this site important for communities up and down the river. Remnant bushland can be seen from the river as well as the iconic roofs of the boatsheds, and the historical homestead built in 1910 by Otto Matthei.

This remnant forest in the western area of the allotment, with its original flora, fauna and landscape, also creates a visual divide between the heritage property and the surrounding modern development.

* **Manageability of the land – whether acquisition improves a reserve boundary, provides better access, reduces threats to conservation assets, or contains assets that assist management**

The Glenlee site has easy accessibility from both Boronia Parade and Bayside Drive. It could connect through to Heinrichs Reserve, creating a walk along the foreshore of the river, extending right through to Gannons Park.

Acquisition will protect the river and this remaining vegetation, as well as the historic buildings on the Glenlee site. Management of the site would be easy given its former use as a homestead.

*** the extent of pests and weeds**

Since the last of the Mattheis left the property (Bill died in 2018), the site has been left to languish. Some weeds and undergrowth have been cleared in intervening years, but the site needs the loving care that National Parks could give it.

*** whether the land is subject to alternative protection mechanisms (land use zoning, conservation covenants)**

Glenlee has been listed by the National Trust for its significant Early Settler History and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, it contains well-preserved evidence of Aboriginal life on the site and is also listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System. The Early Settler Precinct includes Glenlee, Heinrich Reserve and the Hermitage.

Glenlee has been listed as a local heritage item in the *Georges River Local Environmental Plan 2021 (Georges River LEP 2021)*.

*** research and education opportunities**

Because of its Aboriginal cultural heritage and early settler history, Glenlee provides an educational resource for schools, families and organisations. It still has remnants of the early oyster-farming industry and the importance of river transport to the early settlers. Friends of Glenlee developed a community hub proposal for Georges River Council several years ago. Elements of this would work well within a national park.

The existing homestead provides an immediate sense of history, having been constructed over 100 years ago. A section of the homestead could be curated as a museum highlighting the involvement of the site in indigenous and early settler history and culture and in the creation of the Georges River oyster industry.

Other areas of the homestead could be made available for community and educational activities such as:

- language learning
- photographic classes
- book clubs
- sewing and quilting groups
- writing workshops
- music classes
- art lessons
- computer lessons for seniors
- chess groups
- bridge clubs
- history groups
- establishment of small café/kiosk as a meeting place

*** Recreational or visitor experience opportunities**

Georges River Council's "Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy 2019-2036" provided for the establishment of a Peakhurst/Lugarno "community hub", a cluster of facilities providing a range of opportunities for community members to

participate in active and passive recreation. Nonetheless, to date, no such hub exists and there is a dearth of community amenities in the Peakhurst/Lugarno area. There is no library, community centre, community garden, or mens' shed; nor is there direct access in Lugarno to the Georges River for picnicking or kayaking.

Glenlee represents an existing site comprising some 2.5 hectares, on which such a hub could be established within a national park. It is situated in a majestic position fronting Boggywell Creek and with a remnant forest comprising some 200 trees as a background.

The site contains evidence of indigenous history and culture which can be preserved for educational purposes and in recognition of the Eora nation. This piece of the national park could be named in honour of the Aboriginal people who once lived on the land.

There exist on the site a number of work sheds (apparently of similar vintage to the homestead) which could be adapted for use by community craft groups or "men's sheds".

There are two boat sheds standing on the site that could be used for the hire of aquatic equipment. Alternatively, one of the sheds could also be used as a marine workshop for education and learning while working on projects such as kayak building.

The Matthei family maintained an organic market garden on the site for over 100 years. This tradition could be continued by the establishment of a community garden. The site contains rich soil. There are already mature fruit trees in existence and garden beds laid out. One of the sheds on site could be used to store equipment and for propagation and seedling production. This would enable experienced gardeners to teach others and for children to experience growing food.

Disabled people, those living on limited incomes and seniors visit national parks less frequently because of distance and travel times being a hurdle. Creating a park closer to this community provides the opportunity for them to not only enjoy a national park but benefit from the health-giving environment

Most importantly, the site conveys a natural sense of peace and would be perfect for those just wanting to sit and take in the peaceful ambience that exists between the forest and the river.

*** community support for the protection of the land or values**

There is huge community support for the protection of Glenlee, evidenced in the establishment of the Friends of Glenlee Inc. in 2021, and the campaign that has been waged by the community since Glenlee has been endangered. The Friends of Glenlee have a website: www.saveglenlee.com and regularly communicate with their members through updates.

The original DA proposal in 2021 was defeated, as a result of community opposition with 230 submissions made to Council. There have been large rallies held at the site over the years and supportive media articles. The book *Glenlee* was written by local historian Glenyss Barnham. Georges River Council has carried many resolutions of support for the preservation of Glenlee, and written to state and federal governments urging their intervention to protect Glenlee.

The most recent community meeting in 2026 overwhelmingly opposed the latest development proposal on the Glenlee site.

Conclusion

Within the Smooth-barked Apple - Blackbutt - Red Bloodwood open forest and Mangrove Forest within Glenlee, four microbat species listed as Vulnerable under the BCA (2016) are known to occur. Numerous additional vulnerable listed species are likely to use the habitat provided by the property. These include the white-bellied sea eagle, eastern osprey, little lorikeet, powerful owl, varied sittella, grey-headed flying-fox, southern myotis and the white-throated needletail. The Endangered Ecological Community - Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest also occurs on the property and although not recorded previously, it occurs across both Glenlee and the adjacent Heinrichs Reserve. The property is highly connected locally via the Georges River corridor through Lugarno and Saltpan Creek to Oatley Park and the Georges River National Park.

“NSW National Parks are alive with history and culture. From ancient Aboriginal rock-art sites to the buildings left over from early European settlements.” (from the National Parks and Wildlife website)

Glenlee perfectly fits that description. It provides Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Early Settler history, including the original Glenlee homestead built in 1910. This is of State significance. It is believed to be the site of the first amicable meeting between the First Fleet and the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation. It was the first land grant on the Eastern side of Lugarno (1856). The property was owned by the Matthei family for over 111 years.

It has a Blackbutt forest – over 200 trees, many over 100 years old in an area largely untouched since Europeans set foot on the land. These trees act as a refuge for vulnerable and threatened species.

Glenlee’s inclusion in the Georges River National Park would protect and conserve its unique biodiversity. Because it remained undeveloped for well over 100 years, its variety of habitats, ecological communities and processes have been able to develop. The unique group of plants, animals and microorganisms interact within the largely undisturbed space.

In the context of continuing environmental degradation and climate change, combined with the necessity to protect our remnant foreshore vegetation on the Georges River, these impacts alone should be enough to ensure the acquisition of Glenlee as a national park.