

# CAMDEN HISTORY

Journal of the Camden Historical Society



March 2017 Volume 4 Number 3

# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

Journal of the Camden Historical Society Inc.

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## **Meetings**

Meetings are held at 7.30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month except in January. They are held in the Museum. Visitors are always welcome.

## **Museum**

The Museum is located at 40 John Street, Camden, phone 4655 3400 or 46559210. It is open Thursday to Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., except at Christmas. Visits by schools and groups are encouraged. Please contact the Museum to make arrangements. Entry is free.

## **Camden History, Journal of the Camden Historical Society Inc**

The Journal is published in March and September each year. The Editor would be pleased to receive articles broadly covering the history of the Camden district. Correspondence can be sent to the Society's postal address. The Society takes no responsibility for the contents of articles published in the Journal.

## **Donations**

Donations made to the Society are tax deductible. The accredited value of objects donated to the Society are eligible for tax deduction.

**Cover:** 2017 Australia Day Parade (A McIntosh)

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# Stories from *The Menangle News*

## **Ian Willis writes:**

*The Menangle News* is a small community monthly newssheet that has circulated in the Menangle village for many years. It has been the baby of Susan and Brian Peacock who have guided its birth, growth and maturity over many decades. It has carried village news, community news, advertisements, yarns and tall tales and village doings. It really has been a village crier in the best sense of the term. Here are some of these stories.

## **How's Zat (1980)**

### **Tom Curry writes:**

Whilst watching the galaxy of star batsmen on the tele in recent weeks, dressed as though they were about to take part in a sword duelling contest, my thoughts went back to an amusing incident which happened many decades ago.

One annual cricket match which created great interest and prestige in the district was the one when the Macarthur Onslows were hosts to the team of class cricketers from Sydney to play a specially selected Camden District team on the beautiful cricket oval on Camden Park.

Amongst the employees of Camden Park were quite a few very fine cricketers, descendants of whom are playing cricket in the district today. One such employee was always assured of the honour of being selected to play as wicket keeper. He was Jim English, affectionately known to one and all as "Grandfather English". He was a very robust man, with large hands often referred to as big as a No 8 shovel. In those days Jim's wife made all his cricketing trousers, mainly because he needed extra-large pockets, and Jim preferred front pockets to side pockets.

During this particular match one city batsman was giving the locals a real leather hunting. Captain Onslow had tried all his best bowlers without success, so in desperation he gave one of the non-bowlers of his team a turn at the bowling crease. Old Jim English seized the opportunity to give the batsman some information about the new bowler. He told him "This bloke thinks he can bowl, but he's all skite. I'd like to see you teach him a lesson. Hop out and hit him for six."

Down came the first ball which the batsman missed, and the ball slipped through Old Jim's gloves and disappeared. Jim turned and faced the long stop fieldsman. The batsman assumed the ball had gone for byes and started to run. Old Jim quickly removed his glove and retrieved the ball from his huge

trouser pocket and knocked the bails off! The batsman was halfway down the pitch when he realised he was out.

This was a true story told to me by an old gentleman who was a member of the local team at this particular match. His veracity in such matters is beyond reproach.

### **Boxing Day (1980)**

#### **Tom Curry writes:**

It is strange but very true how some little remark or event will spark off a train of thoughts that leads one away down memory lane. Such a thing happened to me on Boxing Day just passed.

Nell and I and our family from the Crookwell District had partaken of a sumptuous luncheon and our ever exuberant grandchildren were champing at the bit to get going to spend a promised poolside afternoon party with their uncles, aunts and cousins at Douglas Park.

It was then my thoughts wandered back some sixty odd years. Boxing Day on those far off days was always picnic day at the river for all the residents of Menangle. With hampers packed full to the brim with all the goodies of Christmas fare, and the old black billy, one of the most important items to take along, groups of families would parade off, some to the front river with its beautiful swimming pool and sandy beach, others would make for the back river and the grassy plateau leading to Archie's Crossing, while others would go to the black hole to spread their picnic rugs down beyond the big steam boiler which supplied the steam for the pumps that supplied the water for the butter factory and Gilbulla.

As the sun began to set in the west, the surface of the river would come alive with countless thousands of fish, just as though a hail storm was hitting the water.

They were such happy joyous days in my childhood one could never forget the pleasure of living in such a pantisocracy and of such propinquity as was Menangle when I was a boy.

### **Tribute to Tom Curry (1981)**

By way of tribute to Mr Tom Curry who died earlier this month (July 1981) two of his closest friends, Mrs Beryl McGrath and Mrs Nea Templeman have written down some memories for our paper.

**Nea Templeman writes:**

Tom Curry, or Ronald Ralf were one and the same; a friend to those who knew him. Going back thirty years or more Tom's interest in horses with his knowledge and experience was invaluable to my husband Noel and brother Ken. His visits were looked forward to – even if it was to listen to stories of those who had passed on.

Tom rode a dark chestnut horse called Freddy to round up the cattle on killing day for the meat for the family butchery. During the Depression our family seemed to live on sausages, there is no doubt a couple extra were edged into the parcel. My mother who lived at the old post office often passed the remark, "I heard Tom go through the Catholic church to work at 3am again this morning." This was his short cut to the store where Tom managed the butcher shop.

The local kids (me being one of them) dearly loved to stand just inside the door to see the sausages being made.

When Tom was courting the one and only Nell, he had a single seater silver grey Ford car, all the kids would ache for a ride in the dickey seat.

I feel we have lost a real friend, I am proud to have had him as a friend and confidante. Up until the 1940s we all seemed one big family in Menangle, sharing good times and bad.

I am happy to say Nell accepted what eventuated and seems to be her smart, quiet, smiling self. She has accepted her years to come with her three wonderful children and her grandchildren.

Thank you for asking me to think up past tales, it was a pleasure, remember I was talking mostly as things were in my teens.

**Beryl McGrath writes:**

God-given peace came to the life of our town's most loved and respected citizen Ronald Ralph Curry always known affectionately as Tom throughout his 72 years in Menangle. At the time of his birth Tommy Burns was at the peak of his boxing career and the new baby was given the nickname of Young Tom.

His entire life has been spent in the village, with his family attending school and Sunday School, and then in adult life he was our butcher at the shop run by his parents G. Curry and Sons for 25 years.

It was a sad day when the business passed out of their hands 33 years ago and they purchased a property in the Crookwell district and branches of the fami-

ly moved away. Over the past few years Tom and Nell have been the sole remaining Curry family to stay in the town.

There are still a few remaining senior citizens in the town who have journeyed down the years and watched Tom's life unfold. Firstly his romance with Nell Dowle, one of six young eligible daughters of Mr and Mrs Alf Dowle, also life-long residents, was watched with interest as it blossomed, and finally the wedding. Then came the births of their children Elaine, Warren and Claire and they were all permanent residents until Elaine married Austin Ryder and lived at Douglas Park. Warren married Mar Dawson of Mount Hunter and settled on the property at Bertalba and Claire married Bill Glenn and went to Douglas Park to live.

For many years Tom commuted between their respective homes and the property spending the working week on the land and the weekends at home. Then as the years and failing health finally caught up Tom retired from physical work. Through his later life came much suffering and trips to hospital, but it was with a smile and a happy memory of past incidents that he loved to recall that he greeted everyone. Tom's happiest hours were spent at the numerous "Back to Menangle" celebrations that have been organised over the years reminiscing with friends who had spent their childhood in the village. Amongst my personal memories I will always recall the evening the people of Menangle organised a kitchen tea for my future husband and I in the local hall. Tom was asked to present us with the gifts and as he spoke he broke down and cried, and I did likewise. And of course we always wondered if it was because he was sorry for us or if he was crying with happiness for us. But all who have known him realise just how deeply he felt for everyone he knew, he was not afraid to show his emotions.

St James Menangle, the church he has attended all his life, was filled to capacity on 9 June when his funeral service was held and was a tribute to both Tom and all his family when so many gathered to show their esteem. Sincere sympathy is extended to the family and we know that his suffering has ended. Some happy memories will linger with us all.

## **The School Of Arts**

### **Vera Hawkey writes:**

In the early 1920s Menangle was a very conservative place where you minded your "Ps and Qs" in fear of what the neighbours might say.

Many happy functions were held, none the less, in the old School of Arts. The dances were a delight with good country music, a lively M.C. and an air of great festivity. The chaperones sat on one side of the hall, the girls on the other, and the boys grouped around the door. As the music struck up, the

M.C. called “Select your partners for the Old Time Waltz.”

The lads broke free and made for a girl of their choice who was looking shy, coy and hopeful. After a bright medley of dances a huge supper would be served and the young couples would walk sedately home behind their chaperones.

## **Times are a-changing**

### **Vera Hawkey writes:**

In 1837 the highest paid price for newly purchased land was 18/- per acre.

The first mention of dairying on Camden Park was in 1826 when John Macarthur is reported to have taken 14 female convicts with the hope of turning them into dairy maids. However only when wool and wheat went west did cattle come to the fore.

In the 1890s milk, butter and cheese were taken by road from Menangle Factory to Sydney. Menangle became the chief receiving depot. Pigs were raised on skim milk from the butter factory, which, produced the Estate’s own “Laurel” brand butter.

## **Keep Smiling**

### **A Menangle local writes:**

Another resident of the village who wishes to remain anonymous has written some snippets which might spark some memories amongst the long-time residents of Menangle.

Early in my teens this rumour or story went the rounds. To begin with there were two middle aged brothers living with their aged mother and rarely mixing with the locals except in their work. One night a spinster cried, “Peeping Tom”, and as usual a search was made but no culprit was found.

The following day one of the brothers related this story: ‘Me and my brother rushed down and hid in the Camden Road Creek – we were sure we would be blamed.’

To my knowledge they had some strange ideas but were never in trouble in this district. Strange how our minds work when in a panic!

I wonder how many remember these old names: Bill Calvert; Charlie Cox (do



we remember?) if only that he was said to be one of the best wicket keepers in the district.

Once, playing cricket in the factory paddock, now the rotolactor yards he was wicket keeping against the mighty Donald Bradman. Other personalities included Scotty Creighton, Jordy and Freddy Cotterill who was a valet, come man servant, to Captain and Mrs Rex Smart, who lived in the home now occupied by Mr and Mrs Halfpenny.

Also these old men mostly carried a sugar bag – goodness knows the contents – but during the 1930s and 40s the bogey man was well instilled in the kids’ minds. Thank goodness he seems to have died a natural death and kids today don’t have to go through that harassment.

### **The Nepean. (1980)**

#### **Nea Templeman writes:**

One of the strong influences on life in Menangle, from the very earliest days of the colony, has been the Nepean River. In the earliest days the river was the boundary for the colony. Visits from Governor Hunter and Matthew Flinders to the area, and the subsequent allotment of small holdings along the river account for much of the early development.

The supply of fresh water to the early pioneers was essential, a thing which has remained essential to this day and for time to come. More recently the river has supplied the sand for the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The river sand was the best quality sand available, and a special railway line was built from the Menangle railway bridge to the river for its transport.

One historic point on the river is Bird’s Eye Crossing or “Archie’s Crossing” as it became known. Archie Tulloh had a cart run across the river at this point, a short cut between Appin and Menangle which he used for many years. This was also the point where Hume and Hovell crossed the Nepean in 1824.

### **Erratum**

Camden History Sept 2016

Pp 50-59 Memories of Barbering Col Smith, Nick Prior should be Mick Prior

# The story of *The Menangle News*

## Sue Peacock

Brian and I moved to our little cottage in Station Street Menangle from Liverpool in May 1977. The Nepean was in flood so we came the long way round via Camden! We were warmly welcomed by our neighbours - other young couples who were also buying their first homes as the workers' cottages from Camden Park were sold off. As we settled in and began our family, we realised that many of the older Menangle residents had lived here all their lives and had some wonderful stories to tell.

As well as St James Anglican and St Patricks Catholic Churches, and the fire brigade the first Menangle playgroup started up about that time. I decided it would be good to have a way to collect the news from these community groups and publish it. I had recently been through a significant epiphany with an encounter with Jesus, who had healed me instantly of post-natal depression, and given me hope and joy. I wanted to share this with my friends and neighbours too!

Another secret of the success of *The Menangle News* was the centralised post office where each household had a mail box, and Margaret Ritchie our post mistress, was very happy to have the "News" on her counter for all to receive. The very first issue of *The Menangle News* was typed up on *gestetner* stencils and duplicated at St John's Church Office in October 1980.

In the early years we had some Menangle celebrities like Tom Curry and Nea Templeman as our story writers – "Menangle As I Remember It" was very popular. (One of Tom's stories is earlier) Our local gossip column "Mayne Lines" was penned by Sue Mayne, who with her husband Dave were proprietors of the Menangle Store, and kept us up to date with births, deaths and marriages etc.

Many community activities took place at the Menangle School of Arts in its day – it was a wonderful centre for dances, trivia nights, playgroups, and elections. Every election would find trestle tables out the front laden with homemade cakes for a fundraiser of some kind. All these things were promoted through *The Menangle News* of course!

Helen Halfpenny's recipes were always keenly sought after, and we had occasional columns on "healthy eating" from resident nutritionists, and medical advice from local doctors. *The Menangle News* is simply a community newsletter – reports from Durham Green, Men @ Shop, Fire Brigade, Menangle

Community Group, promotion of community events like the Christmas Carols on the Common, annual Australia Day Breakfast (which actually began as an afternoon tea to thank all our contributors and was called “The Menangle News Australia Day Awards”. We encouraged Menangleites to nominate neighbours for “awards” and we printed up certificates. Since the School of Arts has not been usable, the fire brigade very kindly allowed us to move down there. They now even take care of all the catering for the breakfast.

Menangle is a wonderful community, and we enjoy contributing with the monthly Menangle News. Originally it was my “baby”, providing an outlet for my love for writing when I had the wonderful privilege of being a stay-at-home-mum, but in more recent years Brian had taken on the production role, allowing me to continue writing a column which is really aimed at spiritual edification. For many years now Steve Charles has printed the “News” on the St James photocopier and Kerry Charles then walks around the village posting it in letterboxes.

Brian and I have been married to each other for over 40 years, we have 4 adult offspring and 8 grandchildren about whom we are dotty! We attend St James Church. Brian works as administrator for St James, and does bookkeeping for St Johns in Camden, and keeps the accounts for our Curves business. He is treasurer for many community groups because he is good with numbers and very kind hearted.

The central motivation of my life is my love for God and desire to see His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. As well as Sundays at St James I belong to a wonderful interdenominational Christian movement called “Aglow International”. I have served as President of Camden Aglow since 2006 and love the opportunities it offers to grow in my own faith and encourage others as well.

A large chunk of my time is invested into running our Curves business – a labour of love! I trained as a PE teacher in the early 1970s, and enjoy providing a gym for women to exercise together and support each other in caring well for their bodies. The Curves circuit of exercise machines is beautifully designed to provide a full body workout in just 30 minutes, which means busy women can fit it into their lifestyle.

### ***The Menangle News Circulation***

Circulation: 218. Email distribution: 68. Letterboxed and community distribution: 150.

Distribution sites: Just the village and Durham Green. Copies are also left at the Store & church for people to take.

# THE MENANGLE NEWS

VOL 27 NO 1

JANUARY 2017

## St James – the light on the hill



*Photo by Steve Braiding*

**Minister: Rev Chris Moroney**  
**Enquiries: Ph. 4633 8594**

### SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES

8.30am: Traditional Service  
10am: Family Service and Sunday School

[www.menangle.anglican.asn.au](http://www.menangle.anglican.asn.au)

### What's on at St James

#### BELL RINGING PRACTICE

Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8 PM  
New members welcome.

#### MEN @ SHOP

...an opportunity for men to relax, with other men, over a cup of coffee or tea in a friendly atmosphere once a week at 10.30 a.m. on Thursdays at the Menangle Store.

The meetings usually last about an hour.  
Contact Chris 4633 8594 / Graham 4633 8810.

## St. Patrick's Church



**Mass: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each Month at 6pm**

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

5<sup>th</sup> Terry Swanson  
7<sup>th</sup> Doug McDonald  
8<sup>th</sup> James Tedesco  
16<sup>th</sup> Victoria Foulks  
19<sup>th</sup> Bianca Peretin  
20<sup>th</sup> Rheannen  
21<sup>st</sup> Joshua Bond  
28<sup>th</sup> Paul Thompson



### ANNIVERSARIES

29<sup>th</sup> Harry & Francis Warner  
Add your special dates to our list by sending an email to: [byp257@gmail.com](mailto:byp257@gmail.com)

### Library

The Wollondilly mobile library visits Menangle every Friday between 11am and 12noon. You will find it parked in St James Ave.

AND don't forget the Little Library at 12 Station Street; available whenever you're passing by!



## AUSTRALIA DAY BREAKFAST

8AM THURSDAY 26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY

AT THE FIRE SHED

\$5 PER HEAD/\$10 PER FAMILY

BACON – EGGS – DAMPER

JUICE – TEA – COFFEE

# An Arts and Crafts house in Menangle

**Laura Egan-Burt**

12 Station St, Menangle

Menangle is a unique, historic village in Wollondilly, New South Wales. Many of the original buildings and cottages survive from the time when the Macarthur family ran the area as part of an English-style feudal village or model town. At least six buildings remain in Menangle that are resonant of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement. I originally wrote this article as an examination of links to the organisation, however, I have since discovered that Sulman knew Morris! "*Sulman was a student of the Royal Academy and was much among the foremost artists in London [sic] and was well acquainted with William Morris and the leaders of the art revival in England in the seventies.*" (Sydney Morning Herald, Monday 20 August 1934)

## **Is Menangle Australia's example of a homegrown Arts and Crafts enclave?**

The St James Church in Menangle is beautiful and unique.

*"St James' is situated atop a high hill at the southern end of the village of Menangle and is visible across many miles of rolling hills. The Nave was designed by John Horbury Hunt and constructed in 1876. Sir John Sulman designed the central tower, chancel and apse which were built after the generous benefaction of Mrs Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow in 1896."*<sup>1</sup>

The amazing organ was designed and constructed by Bryceson and Bryceson.<sup>2</sup>

In 2007 I bought a house that no-one else would buy. My house has some of the same brickwork as the St James Church in Menangle. Ever since I purchased the house, I have been flummoxed as to whether it is Victorian, Queen Anne, Federation or Edwardian. I have been combing historic buildings to find likenesses and precedence in styles. It dawned on me today how very unique my house really is.

## **My house is an Australian example of an Arts and Crafts house.**

I have often watched lifestyle shows, envying the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain and North America. However, I recently realised that I, and two of my neighbours reside in three of Australia's answers to these houses.





**Egan-Burt Cottage at 12 Station Street Menangle 2017 (L Egan-Burt)**

Indulge me as I examine just how viable my theory is, as I draw similarities between the church, the school and the house.

My cottage is hand-hewn, the pitched-roof building is solid, determined to resist change and impervious to all types of weather. The lovingly restored, ten-foot ceilings are made from horsehair; the bricks are of Flemish Bond – which is much more treasured in Perth than Sydney, where heritage listings of similar brickwork have occurred.<sup>3</sup>

The doors are a mix of solid wood and French styling. The verandah harks back to the days where the men would sleep outside due to the weather and their state of cleanliness. There were (and are) no fly-screens, the windows are wide and open outwards, there is always a sense that they should be just that much larger and I am confused as to why the encapsulation of light was not more important to the builder.

The hall is long and luxurious with beautiful original floorboards (alas, these

were too damaged in most other rooms to be saved). These floorboards survived due to the four layers of linoleum we stripped away. The other floors were covered in threadbare rugs and shellacked around the perimeter of the rooms. These floorboards have mainly been claimed by rising damp and have needed attention.

The fireplaces light up what could be a drab and grimly practical house. The one in the kitchen would have housed a wood-burning stove. The dining room fire is wide, warm and inviting, the one in the loungeroom is cosy and comforting. I also have a boarded-up fireplace in my bedroom. I will get it working again one day...

I bought the house without a functioning kitchen or bathroom. The bathroom was a revolting lean-to added in the 1930s and distastefully renovated in the late seventies. I presume that in the grimly rustic kitchen, women slaved over the wood stove and perhaps a few bits of furniture provided some comfort during their cooking. The ladies would have been hot in summer and cold in winter, as the double brick walls certainly celebrate and permeate the changes in nature and the seasons.

Another feature of my house that makes no sense is an ornate arch, which will eventually house the doorway to my bathroom. It is strong, solid and handsome. Such a lovingly built arch clashes with the almost puritan feel the other rooms had before I added comforts such as carpets, paints and soft furnishings. The arch would have only served as a thoroughfare from one verandah to another, where the old copper and stand-alone bathtub would have been located.

### **Would William Morris concur?**

I think he would. William Morris would understand that I see the beauty in the hand-hewn, anti-industrial architecture and materials of my house.

The Arts and Crafts movement flourished between 1880-1910, which is when the Macarthur family built Menangle in a feudal-style to house the workers of Camden Park Estate.

I have heard it rumoured that my house was hand-built by the Macarthurs' resident estate carpenter between 1880-1910. My house is one of three facing Station Street and the old creamery and rotolactor. They were the dairy managers cottages. Workers of the estate were housed in mainly weatherboard settlers' huts.

With all this building and construction, and nostalgia and for an 'Olde Eng-



**External Brickwork on Cottage at 12 Station Street Menangle 2016 (L Egan-Burt)**

land’, would a desire for quality not have been encouraged by the Macarthurs and achieved by their trades and artisans? I believe the quality must have been of an extremely high standard. Menangle is a true tribute to this as the buildings have survived since the 1880s, despite various threats of residential and industrial change to the area.

If the Arts and Crafts movement were ‘en vogue’, why then would these clever craftsmen not have been directly influenced by the projects undertaken by the famous architects Hunt and Sulman who collaborated with the Macarthur family on their public buildings?

The Macarthur family commissioned the building of the historic Menangle school, St James’ Church, Gilbulla and many historic houses and cottages nestled within the Camden/Wollondilly landscape. They did not skimp on quantity or quality of their architectural commissions and employed John Horbury Hunt, who designed the church nave, and was recognized as an Arts and Crafts leader in Australia.

*“The movement advocated truth to materials and traditional craftsmanship using simple forms and often medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. It also proposed economic and social reform and has been seen as essentially anti-industrial.”<sup>4</sup>*

Interestingly, John Horbury Hunt must have crossed paths with John Sulman



in a few locations as both are recorded as designing churches and schools in Armidale and Menangle between the years 1875 -1900.

Unfortunately, there was little camaraderie between the two men and perhaps the clash and mix of styles in my house reflects the public war waging about the clash and mix of architecture in Sydney.

*“Hunt, finally welcomed back into the Institute in 1887, continued where he left off. Much of his scorn was directed at the Palladians, a movement led by John Sulman, whose work Hunt (indirectly) described as ‘huge in bulk, vile in conception, false and reckless in construction, piles that are revolting to the cultured taste and positively revolting to the public mind’. Sulman and eighteen other members resigned in 1890, decimating the Institute. The press dubbed the remaining body ‘The Horbury Hunt Institute’ or ‘Horbury Hunt’s Secret Society’.”*<sup>5</sup>

Despite factions within architecture, both men are recognized as pioneers of the Arts and Crafts movement in Sydney. Harriet Edquist chronicles this history in her text, *Pioneers of Modernism: the Arts and Crafts Movement in Australia*.<sup>6</sup>

As my brickwork is exactly the same as Flemish-bond brick in the entryway to the church that these Arts and Crafts giants designed, I am confident in proclaiming that I reside in a unique Arts and Crafts style cottage in Australia.

## Notes

1. <http://www.menangle.anglican.asn.au/>
2. <http://www.menangle.anglican.asn.au/>
3. <http://www.lifeonperth.com/wesleychurch.htm>
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts\\_and\\_Crafts\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_Movement)
5. <http://www.nswera.net.au/biogs/UNE0216b.htm>
6. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb4817/is\\_2\\_94/ai\\_n31151655/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb4817/is_2_94/ai_n31151655/)

# **Menangle Community Association Inc**

## **Laura Egan-Burt**

The Menangle Community Association (MCA) was established when there was a general realisation that assertive community members had been individually fighting battles against a number of development proposals in Menangle.

Since 2004, there had been many different frontiers of engagement, originating with the Menangle Action Group (MAG), led by Trevor Eirth and Kate Terry. MAG had successfully thwarted a development proposal for an enormous Railport between Menangle and Douglas Park. The only development to occur since MAG's inception was the establishment of Durham Green Retirement Village on Menangle Road in 2007.

## **Station Street Development Proposal**

Approximately 30 years ago, Wollondilly Council had passed a small development application for housing blocks to be developed to the north of Station Street. During 2009-10 the blocks were made 'ready to sell', by the installation of electricity supply boxes and leveling earthworks, causing the historic houses on Station Street to be covered with dust and debris for an extended period of time. As at November 2016, these blocks remain un-marketed and unsold. Unfortunately, a more dramatic planning proposal was about to be released.

Menangle Pastoral, a group of local landowners, employed Elton Consulting to draw up plans to develop the Menangle rotational paddock and Moreton Park Road. The initial proposal was for an industrial estate that has been subsequently re-defined as a housing estate of some three hundred and fifty dwellings that that will dwarf Menangle!<sup>1</sup> The group who would eventually form the Menangle Community Association (MCA) started using the collective wisdom and precedent set by MAG, lodging formal objections to the varying proposals. The plans delivered by Elton Consulting changed each time, depending on objections and planning advice.

The MCA have chosen to take a thoughtful and well-researched approach to their actions providing extensive documentation and genuine objections as to why the planning is not feasible. Menangle Pastoral, however, was displeased with Wollondilly Council's careful reaction to the proposal and lodged a gateway preapproval with the Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP). In November 2016, the JRPP was disbanded and responsibilities have been passed



**Menangle Community Association Meeting 2016 Maurice Blackwood, Graham Noyes and Lesley Traverso at a Menangle Community Association meeting (L Egan-Burt)**

onto the newly formed Greater Sydney Commission. The final view of the JRPP was that there would be development in Menangle, but the size and scope of the development is as yet unconfirmed (November 2016). Menangle is now waiting to see how the GSC will view developments in light of the State Government created 'South West Growth Area' Plans.

## **School**

In Station Street there is an historic school building, built by Camden builders Hindes and Farrington in 1906,<sup>2</sup> on an earlier school site dating from 1871. Laura Egan-Burt and Jason Burt noticed before Christmas 2007 that a development application had been submitted for the demolition of the school with rezoning for housing.

As the Burts had realised the Flemish Bond brickwork was a similar design to the Menangle Store, Gilbulla, St James Church and 12, 14 and 16 Station Street,<sup>3</sup> it was likely that it would be of historic significance.<sup>4</sup> A protest was held at the school site, which was attended by Robyn Parker, who was then



**Banner for Menangle Community Association Inc #SAVEMENANGLE Campaign (L Egan-Burt)**

the NSW Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage. A petition was lodged to state parliament, calling for a moratorium on the demolition and rezoning.<sup>5</sup> After gaining the interest of Alan Jones, radio personality and John Della Bosca, who was the Minister for Education at the time, a moratorium was placed on the demolition of the school.

### **Maurice Blackwood**

Maurice Blackwood, Menangle Rural Fire Service Captain, then stepped in and organised for a land swap to occur between the NSW Department of Education for land at Douglas Park Public School and Wollondilly Council for the land at the Menangle School site.<sup>6</sup> This land swap occurred after much lobbying by Maurice. Once Wollondilly Council took ownership they surrounded the school building with a secure fence. The original weather shed and two toilet blocks remain on the site. The original block has recently been subdivided and one large house is now situated on former school land. Currently, MCA is liaising with Wollondilly Council to establish whether the toilets and weather shed can be refurbished. Unfortunately, the school building itself is now fenced off, awaiting a restoration opportunity.



Maurice was one of the contributors to the original vision document developed by MAG that was used as part of its submissions to both state and local government strategic planning strategies and planning proposals. The documents formed the basis of the community's vision to lobby council for a landscape conservation area for the village of Menangle. This vision was successful.

At the time of the creation of the document, Maurice was a member of MAG and his contribution was focused on identifying the heritage assets in and around the village. Also, other community and MAG members collated information on biodiversity and agricultural assets. MCA has continued to utilise this document and further develop it for subsequent submissions.

Prior the formation of MCA, Jason Burt had been requested by the Wollondilly Mayor, Judy Hannan, to run third on the ticket for East Ward. She suggested to Jason during this time that Menangle should consider some more formal representation to council. Concurrently, albeit separately, Kate Terry organised a meeting for former members of MAG, the Burts, the Anglican Church Ministry and other community members at the only large meeting space available in Menangle – Durham Green Retirement Village. Finally, the formation of the MCA was gathering momentum. Maurice collected names of interested community members at the Menangle Christmas Carols gathering in 2009. Subsequent community meetings became more formal and Maurice was elected chair of the MCA in 2010.

Under Maurice's leadership, community liaison with Wollondilly Council and other stakeholders increased. Maurice achieved many victories, both small and large, amongst which were:

1. Curating a Menangle Heritage Photographic Display and giving related talks to any interested parties. The photographic display is still in the custodianship of the MCA.
2. Lobbying Wollondilly Council for the extension of the existing pathway, - the "path to nowhere" to link residential areas to the railway station. This resulted in Council gaining funds to design a pathway master plan for the village of Menangle, which will go a long way in triggering funding into the future to actually extend the pathway.
3. Making regular submissions to Council and the State Member of Parliament in relation to development applications and rezoning proposals that covered and adjoined Menangle.
4. Liaising with Chris Betteridge, historian for the publication of the land-



**Rotolactor Paddock Menangle 2016 (L Egan-Burt)**

scape conservation area report.<sup>7</sup>

#### 5. Creation of the Menangle walking tour.<sup>8</sup>

Maurice believed in making personal contact with each of the councillors throughout his leadership of the MCA as he saw engagement as key to ensuring good outcomes. This view was taken up by many of the MCA after Maurice's passing in December 2016. A park bench and plaque reading "In recognition of Maurice Blackwood and his tireless contributions to the Wollondilly Community, Dedicated 4 June 2016" was gifted by council to his memory and stands in Dean McGrath Memorial Park in Station Street.

Maurice's main legacy is organising Wollondilly Council to sell the condemned Menangle School of Arts Hall to the Menangle Community Association, elevating the organisation to an 'incorporated' status.

The Menangle School of Arts hall, on Station Street, had been built from cheap materials in the early 1900s. Many newspaper articles from that time cite the hall as a cultural and social centre. The hall flourished. After the council condemned the hall, there remained funds of twenty five thousand dollars, for hall restoration, to be held. Brian Peacock as treasurer of the disbanded hall committee, agreed to the role of treasurer for the MCA and the new vice chair, Hans-Lothar Huhn is leading liaison with council, planners

and architects for the future hall restoration.

## **Community Engagement and Motivation**

Menangle is primarily a village occupied by professionals who commute elsewhere to work. Motivation of busy community members and expectations of them to understand the complexities of planning proposals and lobbying can be challenging. *The Menangle News*, run voluntarily by the Peacocks for over 30 years, the <http://www.menangle.com.au> website, also run by Brian Peacock, the 'Menangle' Facebook page and signage have all played a part in major campaigns, together with more traditional meetings, door knocking, polling and local media liaison.

MCA is exceptional as it also supports members in local political election campaigns. To date, MCA has actively supported Kate Terry<sup>9</sup> (former president of MAG and MCA member) and Matthew Death<sup>10</sup> (former chair of MCA), successful in his #SAVEMENANGLE marketing campaign, to their successful elections as Wollondilly councillors. Unfortunately, both personalities have had to resign their committee roles, as there is a need for separation between council and the MCA, to avoid conflict of interest. The current MCA chair is Lesley Traverso, vice chair is Hans-Lothar Huhn, the secretary is Laura Egan-Burt and Brian Peacock is treasurer, Sarah Deeth is a long-term committee member.

## **Acknowledgements**

Lesley Traverso, Hans-Lothar Huhn, Brian Peacock, Jason Burt, Kate Terry, Benn Banasik, Matt and Sarah Deeth

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# **The Camden Museum Collection Understanding Its Significance**

**Anne McIntosh**

There are hundreds of small museums, public and private, scattered across Australia. Camden Museum is one of many. But which items in those museums are significant? And why does it matter? Are any items in the Camden collection significant, and if so, why?

To preserve ‘value’ within the context of the overall collection, the Camden Museum would like to research and record the ‘significance’ of every item or group of similar objects. In 2008, John and Julie Wrigley produced a report that considered the significance of the Camden Museum’s collection. It lists those items known to be significant within an Australian and NSW context. This report is on file in the Museum.

## **Background**

Camden Museum aims to unfold the history of the town and surrounding district from pre-colonisation through agricultural development and evolution of the community, until today, when the Nepean valley houses (note the pun!) Sydney’s fastest growing suburbs (on land where cattle, turf and poultry once grew).

The records and displays reflect the everyday experiences of all communities: joy and grief, drought and flooding rains, recreation and work, caring and learning. As a collection focused on an area, the museum aims to support anyone interested in researching Camden local history and to provide children with an informed sense of ‘place’ and hopefully, civic pride.

Camden Museum has no paid staff. Membership fees are minimised. Members may come and go, levels of enthusiasm may vary over time. The budget for acquisitions is small – most items have been donated.

For an established collection, curatorial management within limited space becomes increasingly challenging. What donations should be accepted? What items should be retained or have funds invested to preserve them? Who man-

ages ‘the vision’ for the collection as a whole?

To assess individual items (and even an entire collection), a standardised process has been developed. The Powerhouse Museum and National Library (NLA) provide training, expertise and resources so that individual collectors and small museums can prepare consistent and useful documentation on items in their collection.

The term ‘significance’ has been used to collectively draw together a description and other information about an object, and then assess why it has value within the context of a collection. To be significant, an item does not have to be rare or of financial value. Identical items in two collections may be significant for different reasons. Context matters when talking about ‘significance’.

Templates for reporting on significance may vary, but they all include a description of an object, its physical condition, the owner and/or where and when it was used, and how the museum acquired it. It also records other sites or museums with related themes or similar objects.

An item may have significance through one or more of the following:

1. its story or role at an earlier time or place (history)
2. its design or styling (aesthetic significance)
3. its origins, source and ‘individual story’ (provenance)
4. its typical features or unique characteristics (representativeness, rarity)
5. its state of repair and completeness (condition)
6. its ability to communicate and educate in the context of the collection (interpretative capacity).

Having assessed an item against each of these criteria, it is not difficult to sum up the reason that an item is worth acquiring or retaining within collection. This summary is the “Statement of Significance”.

### **Do something significant for the Museum - Prepare a statement**

Although 24 statements of significance have been completed, only a small

proportion of the items within the Camden Museum collection have been documented in this way.

Julie Wrigley oversees the process (contact Julie via the front desk at the museum) and is always looking for volunteers to investigate an object and prepare a statement. Most of the information will be obtained from the museum, the internet, asking members or by contacting sources gained online.

‘Assessing the significance of an object’ is an excellent resource that describes how to prepare a statement of significance. Available from <http://www.centralnswmuseums.orangemuseum.com.au> The Powerhouse Museum has summary statements of their entire collection online providing professional examples across many classes of objects. See <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/>

***“Why are we hanging onto that rusty old thing? We can do that task so much better today. The item is not rare, couldn’t be valuable...”***

### **Camden’s Collection of Statements**

Any member can read the Statements of Significance – plastic folders are placed in boxes near the map files in the ‘Library/Workroom’. Volunteers will discover ‘snippets’ to communicate to visitors, and should be aware which items in our collection have a well-documented background story.

Images of the objects and those used to illuminate their history and provenance are added to the CHS digitised collection, and can be offered to people approaching the museum for information or publication - with acknowledgement, of course!

As CHS members move away, lose interest or pass away, the context of decision making on acquisitions may be lost. The full Statement of Significance provides more information than the MOSAIC digital database. The consistent format should aid management of the collection and protect against naive or personally-motivated decision making.

## **List of Statements of Significance**

# Camden Museum

## Box 1

1970.157	Maud Hodge's Wedding Dress	<i>Julie Wrigley</i>
1970.195	Tomkison Grand Pianoforte	<i>Janice Johnson</i>
1970.240	WWI Spinning Wheel	<i>Julie Wrigley</i>
1970.264	Madras Cavalry Uniform	<i>J Johnson, M Wheeler, J Wrigley</i>
1980.221	Lassetters' Mantolini Mangle	<i>Anne McIntosh</i>
1980.396	Thurn Grape Crusher	<i>John Wrigley</i>
1995.423	Teamsters' Wagon	<i>John Wrigley</i>
1995.424	Teamsters' Wheel	<i>John Wrigley</i>
1996.29	Model of the 'Sirius'	<i>René Rem</i>
1996.118	WWI Memorial Plaque of R.E. (Rex) Smith	<i>Janice Johnson</i>
1998.216	VAD Uniform	<i>Anne McIntosh</i>
1998.249	WWI Memorial Plaque of Hilton Chesham	<i>Ray Herbert</i>
1999.121	Ensign Folding Camera	<i>Robert Wheeler</i>

## Box 2

2003.64	Queen's South Africa Medal	<i>John Wrigley</i>
2008.6	Murrandah Breastplate	<i>Bob Lester</i>
2008.78	Miss Llewella Davies' Key to the Town	<i>Betty Yewen</i>
2008.88	WWI Souvenir Utility Belt	<i>Janice Johnson</i>
2009.3	WWI Shell Case	<i>Chris Hill</i>
2009.41	Clark WWI Souvenir Belt	<i>Janice Johnson</i>
2009.53	WWI British Lusitania Medallion	<i>Janice Johnson</i>
2010.22	Tea Service, John Martin Hawkey	<i>Cathey Shepherd</i>

## Box 3

2012.26	Chinese Market Gardener's Watering Cans	<i>John Wrigley</i>
2013.28	Signature Tablecloth from 1902	<i>Sharon Greene</i>
2013.71	Murdoch WWI Certificate of Appreciation	<i>Janice Johnson</i>

# Australia Day 2017

## Words and Pictures Anne McIntosh

As is traditional in Camden, after the ceremonies to welcome new Aussie citizens, the community gathered along Argyle Street to watch a parade of community groups and a growing collection of renovated cars.

From Oxley Street to Elizabeth Street crowds were four or five people deep, with children seated on the kerbs sporting colourful home-designer fashions in green and gold or featuring the national flag,

For the seventh year, Steve Wisbey, dressed in military camouflage, provided commentary along with his friend, the 'town crier' dressed in red.

John and Julie Wrigley represented the museum in a pale green Holden ute generously loaned by Max Boardman.

In addition to the huge array of restored vehicles, it was pleasing to see the parade led by the riders representing the 7<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. October will be the centenary of the decisive charge on horseback at Beersheba, a victory that was key to the British Allies' ongoing progress in Egypt. One of the Light Horse Brigade's main training depots was near Menangle.





The Rum Corps appeared in their historic, climate-inappropriate uniforms. Another highlight was a costumed family in their historic vehicle, dressed in Victorian attire for picnic.

Australia Day has always been an important day for the Camden Museum. Before and after the parade, crowds mill around the displays, stalls and rides in John Street.

This year, several large display stands were positioned directly in front of the library. This may have prevented some passers-by from realising that the museum was open. However, by the end of the day, more than 120 visitors had passed time in the museum; about one quarter were children.

Additional volunteers were on deck to greet visitors and respond to questions. Volunteer coordinator, Rene Rem, who spoke to almost every group, said, “We had a mix of out-of-towners and locals, but it is always an important day, and many had never been into the museum.”

Thank-you to those who helped on the day: Ian Willis, Rene Rem, Lee Stratton, Rob Wheeler, Doug Barratt, Geoff Chegwyn, Maurice & Kay Augustyn and Anne McIntosh.

### **Wood turning demonstration in John Street at the 2017 Australia Day celebrations in Camden (A McIntosh)**





**John & Julie Wrigley in Camden Museum Holden Motor Car lent by Max Boardman (L Stratton)**

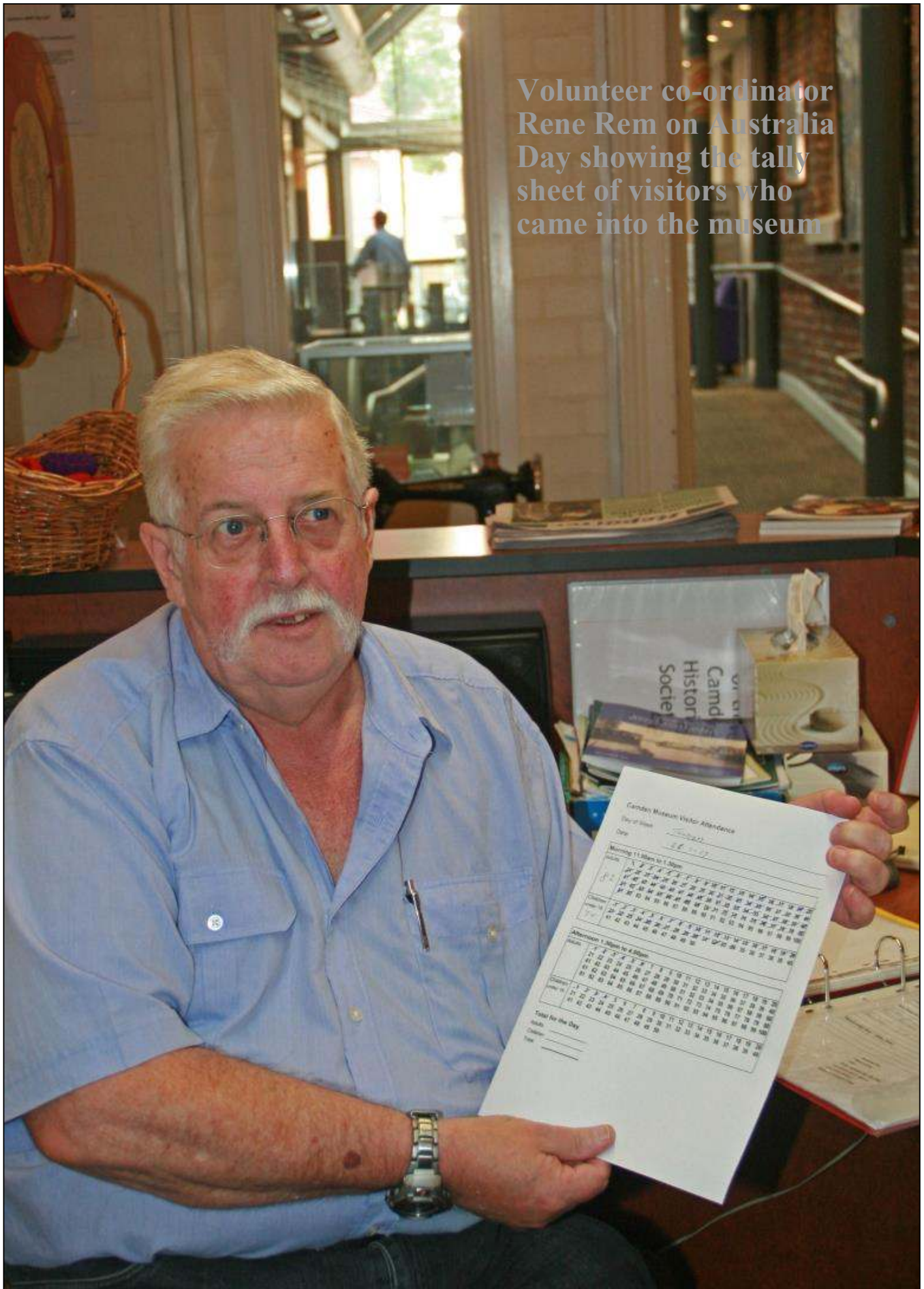


**Crowds of enthusiastic onlookers at 2017 Camden Australia Day Parade at the corner John and Argyle Streets.**





Volunteer co-ordinator  
Rene Rem on Australia  
Day showing the tally  
sheet of visitors who  
came into the museum





# Immigrant Child

## Mark and Trish Thornell

Long term Camden residents Trish and Mark Thornell perform as The Honey Sippers. They wrote the song "Immigrant Child" and performed it for the first time publicly at the 2016-2017 Gulgong Folk Festival.

The song "Immigrant Child " refers to the story of child migrants who came to Australia post-World War II. In 2007, David Hill published a book called "The Forgotten Children" telling of his experiences as one of these children.

In 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued an apology to the 'Forgotten Australians', those children who had been in institutional care and suffered abuse, and former child migrants, who were sent to Australia without their consent.

In the post-war years Britain was eager to shed itself of the cost of supporting impoverished families. Australia was keen to gain cheap, malleable migrants from good British stock, to populate its vast empty spaces. In an era of "populate or perish" another common slogan was "the child, the best immigrant".

Some of these children grew up in the local area. The reality of what these children experienced was far from the promised "Sunshine and Oranges". Mark and Trish expressed their thoughts in words music and this is their song.

## Immigrant Child (Song)

**Words: Mark and Trish Thornell (2016)**

### Verse

They promised an adventure with food of every kind,  
But hands were rough and harsh as they shoved me into line.  
They gave me a case of brand new clothes, the first I'd ever had,  
Said I should be grateful, I was a lucky lad.

### Chorus

Don't ask me any question, why me and why so far?  
For I've never had an answer, no need to tell a child.  
No need to tell a child what's what, no need to ease their fears,  
No gentle smile to soothe, no touch to calm their tears.

They packed me off like baggage to a strange land far away.  
And set me on a farm to work, a man's work without pay.  
They taught me how to read and write, do my sums and pray.  
And when I reached a certain age they sent me on my way.

I still dream of my mother, her touch, the songs she'd sing.  
Small memories so faded now were all that I could bring.  
She never saw me grown, never got to hold my child.  
I have no tales of her to tell, no history safely filed.

I guess my mother's long gone now, words I won't hear her say.  
Did she sometimes think of me half a world away?  
Would she be proud of what I've done, proud of the man I am.  
I more than paid for what I've got with blood, sweat and pain.

**Mark and Trish Thornell performing as the Honey Sippers at the Camden Sports Club at CKs Open Mic Night in 2017 (I Willis)**



# Memories Of Pansy, The Camden Tram

## Wayne Bearup

Being a member of the NSW branch of the Australian Railways Historical Society (ARHS), I was able to travel behind many vintage steam locomotives around NSW, and this included the Campbelltown/Camden branch line.

Liverpool station was the end of the electrified network, and if you wanted to travel to Campbelltown you boarded the local Liverpool/Campbelltown steam service, hauled by a C30 class engine. Also known as the "S" class side tank steam locomotive, hauling vintage end platform cars.

You were not permitted to ride on these end platforms or stick your head out of these open window carriages, but I confess to doing so. That was the terminus for the local, and if you wanted to travel further south, you caught the southern highlands express hauled by a mighty C38 class steam locomotive.

From Campbelltown was the eight mile branch line to Camden that I was fortunate enough to ride on, including the last days.

There was a dock platform for the Camden train, and you would wait at the platform to board your train, which usually was comprised of one carriage and one steam engine, but on occasions there were two engines to haul one carriage. The reason for this was to also haul the milk wagons from Camden and coal wagons from Narellan.

The extra engine was needed to conquer Kenny Hill. Only light weight side tank steam locomotives of the 20 and 30 class were allowed to work the line. Sometimes it was necessary for three engines to be used - two leading and one pushing. This was what was required for the last two days of operation to work the passenger train full of steam enthusiasts.

The last day of service was officially 31 December 1962 and had eight carriages. Permission was granted to run a special train on 1 January 1963 organised by the ARHS. The train ran from Central to Camden and return, and ran with nine carriages.

The last regular train on 31 December 1962, scheduled to leave at 11:58pm, left late from Campbelltown because passengers both on the train and on the platform were singing Auld Lang Syne for the new year of 1963, and so its departure was delayed.

The train was scheduled to leave Camden at 12:30am and arrive at Campbelltown at 1:12am, but this last regular train arrived back well after 1:12am because someone had greased the tracks on Kenny Hill and they had to be cleaned and copious amounts of sand had to be applied to the track to gain traction. The crews were not happy, but we passengers didn't mind.

The last train, 1 January 1963, was scheduled to leave Central at 9:09am.

Arr. Campbelltown 10:42am  
Dep. Campbelltown 11:02am  
Arr. Camden 12:00pm  
Dep. Camden 2:30pm  
Arr. Campbelltown 3:28pm  
Dep. Campbelltown 3:43pm  
Arr. Central 5:16pm

The last day train ticket 1 January 1963 cost me 14/- .

The photos I took were taken either on the last days or in the weeks prior to closure. A mate of mine borrowed his father's Ford Prefect car to go "Pansy" chasing. The Prefect can be seen on page 94 of your journal (September 2016).

The two carriages used on the regular service between Campbelltown and Camden were known as composite cars, coded as CCA. Each carriage was comprised of a guard compartment and seating for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class passengers. To work one train required a crew of three – guard, fireman and driver, plus station staff at Narellan and Camden.

In the closing years, light weight diesel locomotives of the 41 & 70 classes were permitted to work the line from Narellan for the coal wagons, but only steam worked into Camden.

As there was no turntable at Camden, only side tank locomotives could be used, but the Camden Historical Society gained special permission to run a 12 class 4-4-0 tender and engine no. 1243.

In this story I have called it the Camden tram because that was what the locals called it, as the line was built to run steam trams on it. The railways and tramways were originally known as the NSW Government Railways and Tramways, and became separate government departments after 1932.

As the Camden line was originally built for the running of steam tram motors, there was no need for a turntable at Camden, because they could work in either direction without turning.

The only passing loop on the single track line was at Narellan, and safe working was conducted using the staff and ticket method, and the line was divided into two sections:- Campbelltown to Narellan; and Narellan to Camden.



**Pansy the last ride. This photograph was taken by Wayne Bearup on the day of the last Camden train in 1963 (W Bearup)**

# Ghosts And Shadows At Macaria, A Reply

**Janice Johnson**

I read with interest the Camden History Journal September 2016 and the article on *Macaria* by Pauline Downing. Unfortunately Pauline, an excellent researcher herself, used as a reference to Sarah Tiffin an article by Melissa Denford that appeared in the Camden Crier 8 July 1992. Denford, a 15 year old high school student from Elderslie, had won the 1992 History Week competition sponsored by Soroptomists International in the Macarthur region and based her entry around *Macaria*. Her story appears to have been based on the article “The Ghost of Macaria” published in the Macarthur Advertiser 22 July 1987. In an interview with John Wrigley on 25 July 1987 Miss Llewella Davies declared the article was “*nonsense*”.

The Macarthur Advertiser story was pure fiction but it provides a warning to us all to check and triple check reference material no matter how plausible it may appear. Failure to properly identify such errors may result in them misleading future researchers such as Denford and Downing, the fiction being perpetuated, posted on the Local Studies website, and accepted as fact.

Any history on *Macaria* would not be complete without the story of Sarah Tiffin. In an endeavour to provide a factual history on *Macaria*, and the “ghosts”, I have included Sarah’s history and that of her fellow “ghost” William (Bill) Gordon.

Tiffin arrived with James and Emily Macarthur on the “Royal George” on 10 March 1839. Sarah nee Milford had been born in Devon in 1807 the daughter of John Milford. Prior to 1838 she married Robert Tiffin (or Tiffen) but shortly after their marriage Robert was arrested, tried for theft and transported for 7 years on the “Bengal Merchant” arriving 21 July 1838. Employed as a maid to Emily Macarthur (nee Stone), Tiffin may have been hopeful of being reunited with her husband; whether this occurred is unclear. Robert had been assigned originally to Newcastle and later received his Ticket of Leave but this was cancelled due to drunkenness. In the 1840 Census he was living in St. Leonards where he died 1 February 1842. His Certificate of Freedom was granted 25 October 1844 – two years after his death.

Emily Macarthur, in her diaries, referred to Sarah as “*Tiffin my trusty right hand*”; and appointed her as housekeeper at *Camden Park*. The Macarthurs recommended Sarah use an inheritance left by her father to purchase on 6 November 1840 a ½ acre allotment (Section 3 Lot 9) for £36 in John Street



Camden. Sarah had a small Georgian brick cottage (*Camden Cottage*) constructed with a corrugated iron hipped roof, brick chimney and a timber post-ed verandah. According to Alan Atkinson the cottage had been built within two years after the purchase of the land. Sarah, according to Atkinson, “*secured her property to her own use by deed of settlement*” and left the property to “*her maiden sister in England*”. In doing so she ensured that a husband would not be able to claim her estate and named as her trustees as Rev. Charles Frederick Durham Priddle (rector of St. Luke’s Church of England Liverpool) and James Macarthur. In 1844 the cottage was leased, with the assistance of the Macarthurs, to the Court of Petty Sessions for £20 a year. This cottage still stands today and in 2016 was known as the gift store/café *Epicure*.

John Benson Martin, the Clerk of Petty Sessions in Camden, described Sarah’s cottage - “*I began my duties in the John Street cottage, there was but little elbow room as the greater part of the house was occupied by Constable Davidson and his bedridden wife. The spectators overflowed into the verandah, the window being kept open for their convenience, for ventilation and perhaps to constitute an open case. In that small room more important business was done than in any since.*” Constable John Davidson left Camden after the death of his first wife Ann on 17 May 1855 and moved to Campbelltown.

In 1850 Sarah left *Camden Park*, purchased a house in Palmer Street Woolloomooloo, and married widower Francis Middlehurst (1800-1862) on 20 November 1850 at Christ Church St Lawrence Sydney. Middlehurst, formerly a carpenter from Narellan, his son Francis (1843-1913) and Sarah lived in Woolloomooloo until Sarah’s death 14 May 1854. Unfortunately burial records do not give the cause of death but it is understood that she had been ill for some time.

The Woolloomooloo residence was sold in January 1855 by her trustees as part of her estate, but it was not until 20 April 1855 that Henry Thompson purchased the John Street property for £656.5.0 from the trustees. In 1856 Thompson began construction on the picturesque Victorian Gothic building which would be known as *Macaria*. He intended for the building to be used by the Camden Commercial and Classical School under the guidance of headmaster and founder William Gordon.

Gold rush fever delayed construction and on 12 January 1857 Gordon opened his school at *Macquarie Grove* in the house owned by Rowland Hassall. Gordon described himself as a “*Reader at St. Peter’s Campbelltown*” and also mentioning that he was the author of three books. This school was both a boarding and day school for boys and continued until its closure in 1866 when he opened the Spring Vale Academy at Campbelltown; this was a day



### **Macaria in the late 1800s John Street Camden (Camden Images)**

school only; by July 1866 the school had changed its name to Campbelltown Classical School. In April 1869 he moved the Camden, Campbelltown Classical School to *Burton House* Narellan (formerly the *Burton Arms Hotel*). Gordon died at *Burton House* 24 October 1877 and was buried St. Thomas' Church of England Narellan.

Henry Thompson died on 29 July 1871, eleven days after being kicked in the head by his horse outside his house and store in Edward Street Camden. He never lived in *Macaria*. His wife Anne, nee Bardwell, moved to "Marama", Burwood where she died 20 February 1912.

The second son of Henry and Anne, Charles Augustus Thompson an Insurance and Property Agent, lived after his marriage in 1887 in Sarah Tiffin's cottage until his death 26 August 1929. Thompson's eldest son William Henry (1846-1923) managed the Thompson properties in Edward, Argyle, Mitchell and John Streets on behalf of his mother.

*Macaria* remained empty until 1875 when Dr. George Goode purchased the medical practice of Dr. Edwin Chisholm in Argyle Street Camden and leased *Macaria*. He lived there with his family until January 1887 when he moved to Orange. During Goode's tenure there were no known deaths on the premises and no other Sarah's or Bill's known to be associated with the property.



From 1885-1887 the house was leased by Dr. Robert Ettingsall Beattie (1853-1895), before being leased in 1888 to George Bernard Crabbe who opened the Camden Grammar School. It was from this period that the stories of the “ghosts” of *Macaria* began to emerge with the “ghosts” known as “Sarah” and “Bill”. The “ghosts” may have been the result of childish pranks by senior students against gullible juniors. Students told of hearing strange noises at midnight, furniture moving and broken crockery; the “ghosts” had awakened! Or were the sounds merely wind in the chimneys and the normal creaking sounds as metal, timber and stone expanded and contracted with temperature changes? Why should Sarah Tiffin and William (Bill) Gordon haunt a house neither of them had lived in? In 1900 the school moved to *Studley Park* which had its own ghost for students to contend with.

According to the Camden Municipal Rate List of 1900 *Macaria* was empty and the owner Mrs. Thompson. From January 1901 the house was leased by Dr. Francis William West who established his residence and practice and then on 5 May 1904 purchased *Macaria* from Ann Thompson, William Henry Thompson and Alfred Thompson (1852-1940). Dr. West remained in the house until his death 20 October 1932.

Dr. Leo Barclay Heath (1893-1959) purchased the house from the Permanent Trustee Company, executors of Dr. West’s estate) on 19 May 1936 for £2,000 and sold it on 22 August 1938 for £2,500 to brothers Dr. Robert Elbury Jefferis (1893-1979) and Dr. James Tatham Whittle Jefferis (1895-1972). The brothers had served in the Australian Army Medical Corp during WWI.

The next known report on the “ghosts” was from the time of Dr. George Frederick Lumley (1902-1981) who rented Flat 1 in the house from December 1955 until August 24, 1970. There are reports that after returning to the property after a late a house call he was thrown around his bedroom by “Bill”; Lumley’s handwritten history makes no mention of the “ghost” incident.

In October 1965 *Macaria* was purchased by Camden Council who in August 1970 decided to demolish the building and construct a modern two storey office block. Dr. Lumley in Flat 1, and John Thomas Bourke in Flat 2, were given notice to vacate. Miss Llewella Davies and the Camden Historical Society swung into action raising public awareness of the disaster that was about to take place. On 6 November 1970 the National Trust of Australia recommended that *Macaria* be included in the Trust’s Register of Historic Buildings. Council bowed to public pressure and decided to retain *Macaria* but demolish the adjoining stables. *Macaria* remains in John Street today as an integral part of our valued heritage architecture.

Have the “ghosts” finally departed *Macaria*’s elegant walls? Former council employees such as Lorna Farquhar argue that there is 'something' in the building as there were experiences of an unsourced feeling of coldness that signaled Bill's presence. The late Derrick Thorn told the story about a very level-headed staff member, who, whilst writing a report in an office one night about 9:30 pm was spooked by the sound of footfalls on the stairs but was unable to find anyone else in the building.

Others who felt the presence of the “ghost” include former Mayor, Liz Kernohan M.P., who whilst attempting to leave a room one evening after a meeting believed she was physically restrained from doing so! Former Mayor, Frank Hulme Brooking is also reported to having heard Sarah “*rattle crockery*” during evenings when he was in his office but did not feel threatened by her presence.

I’ll leave it to the reader to make their own decision on *Macaria*’s “ghosts”.

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