

# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

**Journal of the Camden Historical Society**



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# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

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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 views expressed by authors in journal articles are solely those of the authors and not necessarily endorsed by the Camden Historical Society.

## **Donations**

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

**Front Cover image: Burnham Grove homestead 2019 (Image courtesy Fortunate Fellow and Burnham Grove Estate)**

**Back Cover image: Burnham Grove homestead hallway 2019 (Image courtesy Fortunate Fellow and Burnham Grove Estate)**

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## **Recollections of childhood on Burnham Grove**

### **Virginia Ghezzi (née Wheeler) and Anne McIntosh**

“I grew up on ‘Burnham Grove’. The property belonged to my grandparents, who I knew as Nan and Da. My father worked with my Da to manage the family farm. They both came from families, who’d lived in the area for several generations,” explained Virginia.

Virginia’s father (Frank) and Da (Raymond) were Wheelers; her Nan (Bertha Florence) was a Doust. They were married in 1917. Virginia’s Nan inherited the property when her father passed away in 1936.

After her grandparents took responsibility for the farm, ‘Burnham Grove’ became known as the ‘Wheeler place’. The Wheelers belonged to the congregation at St John’s, and Da would attend occasionally. Yet even after her marriage, Virginia’s nan remained a devout Methodist attending church regularly in Cawdor.



**Burnham Grove homestead and Virginia as a young child in the driveway (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**



**Virginia's grandfather, Frank Wheeler, and her Nan, Bertha, at Burnham Grove (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

Virginia always knew that she was Anglican. Her parents had been married by Rev Kirk at St John's without much family ado. Her mother grew up in 'the city' - Nan would have preferred that her son had chosen a local girl. Virginia and her siblings were christened at St John's and raised in the Church of England.

### **First home**

She recalls a happy and adventure-filled childhood on the farm. "There were more than 50 acres of land and we were free to roam across it all." As they grew older the children would venture further from home. Wild blackberries grew beside the road and were delicious. Smart's farm was next door, and he grew watermelons. Sometimes the children would sneak onto his place and treat themselves.

The neighbouring farms of the Smarts and the Dousts had access to the creek. Approaching the water was forbidden but, in summer, irresistible. The children would play and swim in the waterholes.



**The cottage. “It was built as a workman’s cottage, and had been there for a long time.” (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

The farm was next to where Camden High School stands today; back then it was mid-way between the schools in Camden and Cawdor, and more than two miles from both. “My father went to school in Camden – so we did, too. There was no bus – we rode our bikes. Mine was a Malvern Star. You had to be careful – there were some big coal trucks on that road!” It would be many years before the school bus service operated along Cawdor Road, “though whenever Mum was going into town, she would drive us,” said Virginia.

“Our family lived in a timber slab cottage behind the main house.” She pauses, and moves on to the realities: “You had to walk along a path to the bathroom. There were two bedrooms, a kitchen and a lounge room – it wasn’t large. When I look back, I remember the love, not the lack of space.

“When my sister was born, three kids and our parents were living there. There were electric lights, but Mum cooked on a metallic black fuel stove. Dad made sure she had plenty of wood. Our cottage had been built as a workman’s cottage, and had been there for a long time.”



**Virginia, Michael (cousin) and Greg Wheeler c1950s (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

## **Mixed farming around a dairy**

Horses played a prominent role on the farm and all the children learnt to ride – mostly bareback. When Virginia was very young, her father used a draft horse to plough the paddocks. He also had an ex-racehorse, a big stallion called Duke – “it was ridden by no-one but my father”. There was also one very cranky pony. “The bigger kids would ride him, and he kicked and bucked. Luckily, my pony was smaller and friendlier,” Virginia recalled.

Her father had a German Shepherd called Prince who was with him constantly. After many years, the dog became slow and sick. “When Prince was dying, Dad spent several nights sleeping out with him in the hayshed.”

As a child, Virginia often went to the dairy with her father. Before milking, the cows would be fed in a separate shed. A rail track ran beside the trough and was used for distributing the feed. The farm produced hay and stored it in a shed. She recalls that all the cows had names, and she conscientiously learnt those names and the characteristics of the cows. She struggles to recall the colours of the cows, but describes a mixed herd with a dominance of Ayrshires and Friesians.





**Alan and Doreen Marshall, Virginia and Greg Wheeler, Michael Wheeler (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

It was only a small dairy – probably six bails and the cows were milked by hand. Virginia believes the milking machine must have been installed when she was a teenager, by which time, her own family was no longer living on the farm. In addition to her father and grandfather, her nan was actively involved in dairying. Virginia clearly remembers feeding the poddy calves with her.

Later, the milk would be picked up from the tank at the dairy, but, Virginia does recall the men loading milk cans onto a truck and leaving them at the side gate. There were a number of dairies nearby – the Smarts, the Dousts and others – they all shared a ‘tanker run’ back to the depot in Camden.

Back then, most dairy farms raised pigs, and there were always ducks and chickens for meat and eggs. “I loved collecting eggs and in primary school, I had to feed the chooks. We butchered our own birds for Christmas and Easter, and whenever family came to stay,” Virginia says.

Yet, of all the husbandry activities on the farm, branding calves is the one that Virginia recalls with particular distaste. “The calves would cry, but even worse I think, was the burning hair and flesh. It’s years since I was around at

branding, but I will never forget that smell.”

At the main house, the gardens were large with hedges and roses, and scope for fabulous games. For family use, Virginia’s grandparents grew vegetables, so the food served was almost always fresh. Virginia fondly recalls the corn which was very sweet. Her nan also had some fruit trees – in season, there were peaches, pears, apples, oranges, apricots, figs and pomegranates.

### At the big house

‘Burnham Grove’ was one of the earliest farms on the Cawdor Road. The land had been one of four clearing leases offered by the Macarthurs along the road.

Virginia remembers her nan and two aunts fondly. For her, the house was a place of community, comfort and love. “Lola and Edna taught me to cook and sew.” Virginia laughs as she recollects her early attempts on the black treadle sewing machine. “It took coordination. My aunts were very patient with me.

“My aunts and grandmother all sewed; they had their own specific interests and skills. They would embroider designs onto homemade objects. They did a lot of their own dressmaking and gifts were always handmade – stitched or knitted. Auntie Lola also did leatherwork – she made bags and belts.”

As a child, Virginia was rarely invited into her grandparents’ bedroom where there was a four-poster bed with a fabric ‘roof’. However, on the rare occasions that she had access (sometimes invited, occasionally in secret), she would sink into the feather mattress. “It was so deep and soft that there would be an impression of your body when you moved away,” she recalled.

Every bedroom had a fireplace with a screen; in winter, a fire would be lit in every room that was occupied. Each bed had its own handmade quilt.



**BURNHAM GROVE Alan Marshall with Greg and Virginia Wheeler c1951 (V Ghezzi/ CAFHS)**



**BURNHAM GROVE Frank and brother Arthur Wheeler playing tennis (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

Monday was washing day and the laundry with its wood burning copper would be busy. When they were washed, the clothes would be taken to the back of the yard where there was a frame with parallel wires to which the clothes were pegged. A forked pole was then pushed under the wires to lift them and the clothes would hang high to catch the wind.

Her grandparents were very ‘hospitable’. Virginia would hear stories about how, during the depression when cash was short and supplies limited, every itinerate swaggie that passed through Camden would learn of the abundance at ‘Burnham Grove’; there was no work on offer, and the men would be sent on their way, but they never departed empty-handed.

There was a grass tennis court near the house. This area now houses the marquee used for events at Burnham Grove. The court was used regularly, both socially and by local comp teams. “Because of that court, we and our cousins all learnt to play tennis and became competent and enthusiastic players. Michael Wheeler went on to win tournaments around Sydney.”

Virginia remembers that there were always people visiting ‘Burnham Grove’.

All the girls were great cooks. A dairy farmer’s days were long, and breakfast



**BURNHAM GROVE Bertha Wheeler and Deirdre Wheeler (daughter-in-law) playing tennis (V Ghezzi/CAFHS)**

would be eaten at the dairy.

However, the men always returned to the main house for morning and afternoon tea. Approaching from the paddocks, they would be greeted by the smell of baking from the wood-burning oven – it might be scones or a cake, or biscuits. Family, workers and guests would gather around the table in the centre of the kitchen. Over the years, Virginia’s nan and her two aunts won many prizes at Camden Show for their cooking and their preserves. Food was always served with tea; “everyone drank tea”. The tea was poured from a tea-pot into a cup on its matching saucer; most people drank white tea, but the quantity of milk and sugar could vary greatly.

Relatives from Sydney frequently spent the weekends at the main house. Locals dropped in for a cup of tea, filled up on cake, and always left with a swathe of seasonal fruit and vegetables.

Fresh bread was delivered daily by Stuckey Bros. “Sometimes when you picked it up at the front gate, it would still be warm,” says Virginia.

Once a month, the Methodist Minister would come for Sunday roast. The

family would gather together in the dining room, sitting around the big rectangular table. “It must have seated 14! I know we played a game called bobs on it.” There would be a range of vegetables on offer with the traditional accompaniments such as gravy, and apple or mint sauce. Dessert was much anticipated – hearty treats that used the fruits from the orchard, home-grown eggs and cream from the dairy. Virginia recalled fruit pies with custard, bread and butter puddings, rice and tapioca puddings. Occasionally her grandmother made ice-cream – “it didn’t taste like ice-cream from the supermarket,” Virginia recalled. “Nan’s ice-cream was very rich and filling.”

Her nan, Bertha, had a pantry/office that was accessed from the dining room. It was small and narrow with a desk filling the space near the window at the end. There were shelves along the walls and they were filled with preserved fruits, jams and chutneys. There was a trapdoor in the floor that led to the cellar, which “was always cooler than in the house”.

Nan hated storms. When she heard the thunder, Virginia recalls her going to the pantry and sitting in the dark beside the window.

## **The end of small-scale dairying in Camden**

As the years went by, mixed farming enterprises that included dairying became more marginal. “Burnham Grove was too small to maintain two families,” said Virginia.

Bertha Wheeler passed away in 1973, leaving the house and an acre of gardens to her two living daughters; the farmland was left to her sons, Virginia’s father, Frank, and his brother, Arthur. The house and land were sold separately, however today, much of the property has been reunited as a wedding and function venue. The gardens were restored to their Victorian magnificence and subsequently extended, and a large carpark has been built. There have been a series of owners of the venue, and the interior of the house has been renovated several times.

*(In 2008, Jenny Akers recorded a conversation with Edna Marshall (Virginia’s aunt) which described her knowledge of ‘Burnham Grove’. That article was published in the Jul/Aug edition of this journal.)*

# The Quiet Achiever: Camden Post Office

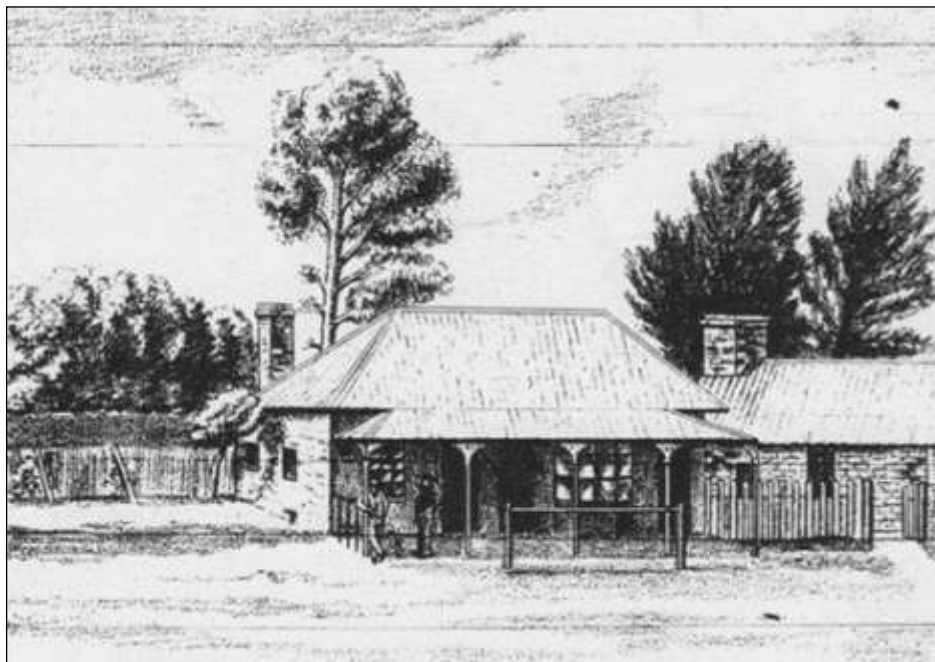
**Dianne Matterson**

In 1828, seven country post offices were established outside Sydney, the closest to Camden being Campbelltown. However, when the Goulburn mail coach began to stop at Cawdor courthouse in 1836, the Clerk of Petty Sessions, James Pearson, was authorised to also act as postmaster, assisted by his wife, Eliza. Two years later, the Colonial Secretary established a post office near the Cowpasture Bridge and John Pettingale, followed by George Skinner, were appointed as postmasters. By January 1839, this early post office, located midway between Macarthur Road and Wilkinson Street on the southern side of Camden Valley Way, was open for business.<sup>1</sup>

As the Macarthurs began to sell more ½ acre lots on the western side of the river, it wasn't long before the post office was moved to Camden. The timber courthouse at Cawdor was dismantled and rebuilt at 55 Argyle Street (Argyle Gourmet Delicatessen), opening its doors as Camden Post Office on 1 May 1841. James Pearson was once again the postmaster, but when he died shortly afterwards, his wife took over as postmistress and filled this role for nearly 40 years. As well as providing a postal service, Eliza Pearson also sold drapery, lollies, cabbage-tree hats and took in laundry.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1870s, telegraph lines were spreading out from Sydney using Morse Code to transmit messages. In December 1877, a telegraph office was opened in Camden in the two front rooms of a cottage rented from James Bocking for 10 shillings a week, while the back was rented to a baker. However, just a year later, the postal authorities proposed combining the post and telegraph offices into one building<sup>3</sup> as an amalgamation of the two services would reduce the costs to the public purse. The new telegraph office was considered unsuitable as a combined office, and despite the possibility of renting Dr. Moreton's house or Mr. Waterworth's cottage, the amalgamation of the two services didn't actually happen for another two years.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1879, the colonial government advertised for a telegraph and post office site 'between Oxley and Elizabeth Streets'.<sup>5</sup> Two sites were recommended by the postal inspector: one owned by the Bank of N.S.W. (Westpac) or one of John Lakeman's vacant lots from the corner of Argyle and Oxley Streets to Charlie Smith's Saddlery, which was adjacent to the Commercial Bank (NAB).



**Camden Post Office, 1841-1882 (Source: Camden Images)**

Although land had not yet been secured, tenders were called for the construction of the new post office in June 1879. After offers of land from the Bank of N.S.W. and William Macarthur, the postal authorities purchased Lot 15 from John Lakeman in January 1880 for £330 (£5 per foot of frontage).<sup>6</sup>

While the plans for the new post and telegraph office were considered, William Macarthur rented 61 Argyle Street (Barry Smith Dental on Argyle) to the government for £40 as a temporary post and telegraph office. The fit-out of the combined office cost about £14 and included the addition of a ‘few panes of glass’, a stove (as there was no fireplace) and an office table. In April 1880, the plans for the new building were completed, but the £2,000 price tag was considered too high; the Postal Inspector also thought the plan lacked merit and recommended that a building like that at Cooranbong be erected. The Cooranbong Post Office was located on a corner and the design included a corner verandah over the main entry, a design feature that became part of the Camden Post Office plans despite the building site being in the middle of the street block.

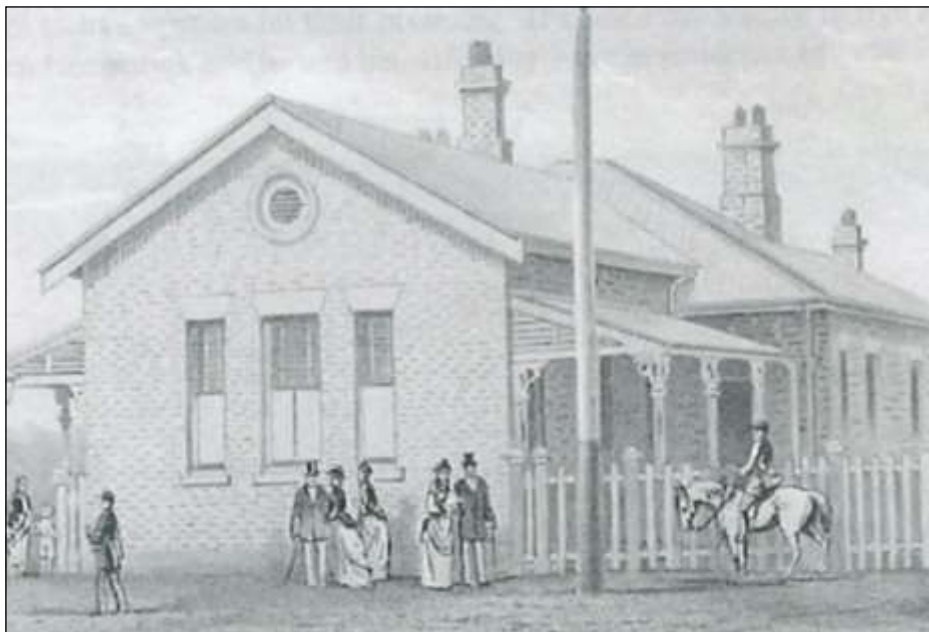
In October, amended plans for the Camden Post Office were again forwarded to the Postmaster General. The estimated cost of £1,800 was still £600 more than the amount approved in the budget. It was considered a large sum to spend on a 'small office' such as Camden, so the plans were again altered to reduce the cost and tenders were again called. The plans at this stage included an office, sorting room, sitting room, dining room, two bedrooms, kitchen and a pantry.

On 23 December 1880, the Dept. of Public Works accepted a tender of £1,070 from local builders, J. & W. Packenham.<sup>7</sup> Work was to be completed within 6 months, however, in April 1881, Thomas Garrett M.P. drew the attention of the Minister for Works to the advisability of erecting the whole of the building as originally planned. The architect forwarded a tender of £487 from the building contractors for the additional work and the following month the extra funds were obtained from the Colonial Treasurer.

On 1 April 1882, the telegraph and post office was opened. There were verandahs on each side of the building that were accessible from Argyle Street: the left-hand one gave access to the telegraph office while the right-hand verandah led to the postal boxes. The single-storey telegraph and post office was in the Late Victorian style and sections of the original construction are visible from the rear of the existing building where a darker brick to that used during later construction can still be seen. A different sub-floor/wall vent style to that used later, is still in place in this older section. The 'seam' between this building and the later addition can be seen immediately above the current postal boxes on the eastern side of the building.<sup>8</sup> The verandah protecting the entrance was supported by timber posts decorated with fretwork.

In December 1895, Ald. Frier raised the issue of the lack of privacy for customers using the telegraphic, postal, money order and banking services. Ald. Whiteman suggested that as the foundations of the present building were laid with a 'view of future enlargement', it could easily be extended 'for the convenience of the public'.<sup>9</sup> After the mayor's unsuccessful representation to the Postmaster General on the matter, it was referred to the local member, Mr. C. Bull M.P.<sup>10</sup> In July 1896, £150 was allocated in the government budget for the construction of a 'servant's room' and a 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor addition to the existing building<sup>11</sup> that would then include a "Post Office room, Postmaster's room, public lobby, porch and store room, on the ground floor extending 40 feet along the building alignment, with a depth of 29' feet. On the first floor there will be two bedrooms, a bathroom and balcony. A laundry will also be erected, as well as a new fence and gates, extending from the building along the





**Camden Post Office, 1882-1898 (Source: Camden Images)**

front alignment.”<sup>12</sup> The rear and first floor accommodation was for the postmaster. The estimated cost of £475 was far in excess of the allocated funds.

Ald. Willis had another idea, and proposed Camden Council “urge upon [the Postmaster General] the advisability of erecting an imposing building on the street corner adjoining the present post office, and that the building of the present office be vested in [the] council for a fire brigade station”.<sup>13</sup> A new building was considered unnecessary by the Postmaster General, and instead he increased the £150 already allocated to the upgrade to £750.<sup>14</sup>

The upgraded building was built in the Federation Free style with a terracotta tiled roof, a balcony and a slat work timber frieze over the front step supported by a sandstone column.<sup>15</sup> The original front elevation was brought some feet closer to the footpath. The sides of the new building were extended to the width of the verandah on the old building, and the main entrance was constructed on the south-eastern corner. The western side of the building where ‘letters and newspapers’ used to be deposited became part of the larger office space for the dispatch and receipt of mail. The main office was ‘considerably enlarged and made more commodious’ to accommodate the diverse functions

undertaken by the post and telegraph office at this time, which included the registration of all births, deaths and marriages.<sup>16</sup>

The successful tenderer for the upgrade was the local firm of Cleveland and Peters; Mr. Peters was the builder.<sup>17</sup> James Stuckey, a bootmaker, agreed to lease his premises at 95 Argyle Street (Crème Della Crème) to the postal authorities for £1 a week during the work on the post office.<sup>18</sup>

The official opening of the post office on 30 September 1898, was to be done by the Postmaster General, the Hon. V. Parkes. No officials from the government or the postal department turned up on the day and the Mayor, Ald. W.C. Furner took over, and opened the Post Office before the gathered crowd.<sup>19</sup> The upgraded post office had a main hall, “whilst the accommodation for the general public, outside the counter is 12’ by 9’, and in this open space is the desk for writing out telegrams, etc., and a lobby screen for entrance to the main hall, for the use of the officials... the delivery of letters may be obtained from a window in the portico, without entrance to the main building. The telegraphic operating department is on the left of the main office, the table or counter for the various instruments, telegraphic and telephonic, being some 24’ in length, and such a distance from the public counter that the telephonic communications will not be audible. The telephone instrument is not so far enclosed or cased, and will be used by the operators only to the various existing stations, The Oaks, Narellan, the Carrington Convalescent Hospital and two local private telephones. The mail bag is at the farther side of the building with a separate roadway and entrance, the public will not therefore be incommoded by the arrival and dispatch of the various mails; adjoining this entrance are the various store rooms for the use of the post officials and the quick dispatch in sorting, etc. The main office is well lighted (sic) by three windows on the left facing Argyle Street, and between the telegraphic, etc., tables and the main office are three arches, supporting the rooms over the building proper. The various fire-places (sic) are adorned with tiled hearths, with mantel-pieces (sic) to match. In the interior of the office stands the various tables for the working of the very many requisite duties. The whole of the fittings throughout are of polished cedar, the counter is some 12’ long by 3’4” wide. The residence of the postmaster has been substantially altered and improved, adding more essential requirements as a residence. Over a portion of the office building with entrance from the chambers of the postmaster, is a spacious balcony some 26’ long by 10’ in width, facing Argyle Street. The painting or colouring of the various walls are of a light green, with brown dado, dark green dividing.”<sup>20</sup> This description places the telegraphic office on the western side of the building, while the ‘separate roadway’ referred to is now the laneway on the eastern side of the post office.



**Camden Post Office, from 1898 to date (Source: Camden Images)**

With Federation, came a national system of mail collection and delivery, and the Postmaster General's Department (P.M.G.) was established. All colonial post office authorities no longer existed. In 1902, unsuccessful requests for a direct telephone connection to Sydney were made to the P.M.G. by Camden Council. Another unsuccessful request was also made for a telephone or telegraph service to be available on Sundays during certain hours. On this occasion, the P.M.G. advised Camden residents to go to Campbelltown where "any urgent messages would be accepted at the Post Office there between the hours of 12 noon and 1 p.m."<sup>21</sup> It would be another 3 years before the telephone line was extended from Campbelltown to Camden.<sup>22</sup>

In August 1905, the P.M.G. replied to another Camden Council request for the establishment of a telephone exchange at Camden Post Office, pointing out that this would cost £240, but if the council could 'get fifteen subscribers with an average payment of £16 each per annum', the P.M.G. would agree to the establishment of a local exchange. The aldermen thought this would only work if the 'trunk-line' charges to Sydney were abolished, a suggestion the P.M.G. refused to countenance.<sup>23</sup>

At last, in 1910, Camden Telephone Exchange was constructed in the south-western corner of the main postal hall within the existing building footprint in

a small room immediately opposite the entrance door,<sup>24</sup> and opened in November with 17 subscribers<sup>25</sup> who received a service at stipulated times of day.

In 1913, Postal Department revenue from the Camden Telephone Exchange was £27 in calls and £120/19/4 in 'ground' rentals. Camden Council was informed that once the total revenue reached £150, the exchange would be entitled to a 'continuous' service that wouldn't be limited to certain times of day.<sup>26</sup> By 1916, the phone service was still not 'continuous' and the P.M.G. informed subscribers that a minimum revenue of £250 was now required before such a service could be provided. Subscribers could choose to either make up the shortfall by paying an additional annual charge that would equal the required amount, or, pay an amount equivalent to the additional wages that would be paid to exchange staff while working the extra hours.<sup>27</sup>

In 1920, a public phone booth was placed inside the post office. This once again created concerns about the privacy of calls being made within earshot of members of the public who were using the Post Offices' other services at the same time. By November 1948, at least one public phone booth was in place outside Camden Post Office.<sup>28</sup> The cement foundations of two boxes can still be seen today adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the post office. People who wanted to make a trunk (long-distance) call from the public phone box rang a bell on the nearby wall. One of the staff from the exchange opened a window, took the booking, advised the caller how much the call would be for 3 minutes, and took the payment in cash. It was a challenge sometimes to be heard when making a call here, especially during the day when the coal trucks from the mines at Burragorang went through the main street. Even at night the noise from interstate freight trucks was a problem, as in those days Argyle Street was part of the Hume Highway. The last shift for female exchange workers ended at 10 p.m. at which time, the male employees took over until the morning shift began.<sup>29</sup>

By 1953, as the number of phone subscribers in the district grew, the exchange within the post office footprint was no longer adequate, so W.C. Peters sold his old sawmill land at 40 Argyle Street (now Liv For Beauty & Soul) to the Commonwealth of Australia for the construction of a new telephone exchange. In 2020, the area within the Post Office footprint that was vacated by the exchange after 1953, is now occupied by the small office/storage area opposite the main entrance.

Camden Post Office sits quietly on our main street, having evolved from

what were humble beginnings at Cawdor courthouse, followed by the occupation of the front rooms of a cottage at Elderslie and a small building at 55 Argyle Street, through to its development during two major construction phases at 135 Argyle Street. In 2002, Camden Post Office was included on the N.S.W. Government's heritage items list as part of Camden Council's Local Environmental Plan and, a decade later, joined the Commonwealth Heritage List.<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> An 1840 map held by Camden Museum shows the Post Office marked at this location. Martin, J.B. et al, *Reminiscences of Early Camden*, Ed. J. Johnson, Camden Historical Society Inc., 2012, pp. 29, 91
- <sup>2</sup> Martin, J.B. et al, *Reminiscences of Early Camden*, Ed. J. Johnson, Camden Historical Society Inc., 2012, pp. 28, 49. Atkinson, Alan, *Camden – Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 48
- <sup>3</sup> Australian Government Dept. of Agriculture, Water & the Environment: Commonwealth Heritage List – Camden Post Office
- <sup>4</sup> National Archives of Australia: Camden Post Office file – Box 139, Series SP32/1: Camden Part 1, barcode 315495, pages 105-106, 109
- <sup>5</sup> N.S.W. Government Gazette, 13.5.1879, p. 2129 [Issue 166]
- <sup>6</sup> Land Sales: Book 198, Number 554 (Camden Museum Archives)
- <sup>7</sup> N.S.W. Government Gazette, 21.1.1881, p. 403 [Issue 28]
- <sup>8</sup> Observation by Dianne Matterson in 2018
- <sup>9</sup> Camden News, 19 December 1895, p. 6
- <sup>10</sup> Camden News, 12 March 1896, p. 2
- <sup>11</sup> Camden News, 2 July 1896, p. 5
- <sup>12</sup> Camden News, 27 January 1898, p. 4
- <sup>13</sup> Camden News, 22 April 1897, p. 2
- <sup>14</sup> Camden News, 6 October 1898, p. 1
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Government Dept. of Agriculture, Water & the Environment: Commonwealth Heritage List – Camden Post Office
- <sup>16</sup> Camden News, 2 September 1897, p. 4
- <sup>17</sup> Camden News, 23 December 1897, p. 4
- <sup>18</sup> Camden News, 16 December 1897, p. 4
- <sup>19</sup> Camden News, 6 October 1898, p. 1
- <sup>20</sup> Camden News, 6 October 1898, p. 1
- <sup>21</sup> Sidman, G.V., *The Town of Camden*, Camden Public Library & Liz Vincent, 1995, p. 52
- <sup>22</sup> Sidman, G.V., *The Town of Camden*, Camden Public Library & Liz Vincent, 1995, p. 53
- <sup>23</sup> Sidman, G.V., *The Town of Camden*, Camden Public Library & Liz Vincent, 1995, p. 54
- <sup>24</sup> Australian Government Dept. of Agriculture, Water & the Environment: Commonwealth Heritage List – Camden Post Office. Nixon, D. & Mylrea, P., *The Telephone Comes to Camden*, Camden History – Journal of the Camden Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 5, p. 104
- <sup>25</sup> Sidman, G.V., *The Town of Camden*, Camden Public Library & Liz Vincent, 1995, p. 60
- <sup>26</sup> Camden News, 28 August 1913, p. 8
- <sup>27</sup> Camden News, 8 June 1916, p. 4
- <sup>28</sup> Camden News, 11 November 1948, p. 6
- <sup>29</sup> Memories of Charles Dunk, a former Camden resident
- <sup>30</sup> N.S.W. Government Department of Planning, Industry and Environment: Heritage Places and Items – Camden Council's Local Environmental Plan. Australian Government Dept. of Agriculture, Water & the Environment: Commonwealth Heritage List – Camden Post Office

Other general references:

Camden Museum archives, particularly the 'Post Office' file.

We Deliver: A Brief History of Mail Delivery and The Oaks Post Office, 1858-2008: Australia Post publication

# The Connections Between Local History and Family History

**Jo O'Brien**

As secretary of Camden Area Family History Society I have been asked several times recently “What is the difference between history and family history?”, “What does your Society do?” or “Which society should I join – Family History or Historical Society?” (for many of us the answer is both of course!). But what are the differences between studying the history of an area and family history?

I grew up with stories of family, and I have always found them fascinating, who my ancestors were, where they lived, and what they did. But I must admit - at school I found history, especially Australian history, a bit boring. Lots of dates and journeys of explorers, and the machinations of government, and wars. The emphasis was on the big picture and the famous people, and I didn't feel a personal connection. However, I did feel connected to the places in my family stories – Bundeena, Bexley, Liverpool - and interested in what they looked like then and now, and what everyday life was like for my ancestors.

I have been doing family history research most of my adult life and have been able to add significantly to the stories and research I inherited. Through my research, I became increasingly interested in the times in which my ancestors lived. Now those once boring historical events fascinate me, mostly because of the family connections - the details of my grandfather's war service, the ancestors who were the early settlers that followed the explorers, the convicts and their journey to freedom in the new colony. Knowing where my ancestors were and knowing the events that happened while they were there, the well-known people they may have met, the places they saw with their own eyes – it all adds to the story and brings it to life. Knowing that my ancestor's family lived in Ballarat is one thing, reading that my ancestor's sister witnessed the Eureka stockade is much more exciting.

One of the obvious differences is that with family history the focus is on your family and your ancestors. You follow their journey wherever they go, so unless they spent their whole lives in the one place, your research will include places from all around the world, and the travel between the two. In Australia we all have ancestors that have travelled, some multiple times and great distances from the other side of the world, as well as throughout Australia. Over the course of his life my great-grandfather John Torpey, born in

## **EUREKA STOCKADE BATTLE**

A message from Stawell (V.) states that Mrs. Caroline Tauschke, 87 years of age, one of the few remaining eye-witnesses of the Eureka stockade battle fought at Ballarat between the miners and the soldiers, died at Eltham (V.) on Monday. Mrs. Tauschke had lived at Stawell for nearly half a century.

In 1854 Caroline Hanney (aged 8) witnessed the Eureka Stockade battle, presumably her sister Ann (my great great-grandmother, then aged 12) was also there.

Bungonia, travelled south probably as far as Wagga Wagga, then north via Condobolin, and Bourke to outback Queensland and Toowoomba before he ended his days in Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island. Quite a journey over the span of his life, and many places whose history is of interest to me as I pursue my family history research.

With local history, the focus is on place, including the people, but also events, objects, buildings, and the environment. The focus stays in the area as the people come and go. The stories of buildings, archaeology, events, historic items and local features are all fascinating in themselves. Yet people are an essential ingredient of any study of history - who lived there, who was at the event, how people used an item. Although, in the past the focus has often been on those who are more notable, this is changing as we recognise everyday people and their contribution to the history of a place. The provenance of an item, who owned it and how it was passed on, adds significantly to its value and to its story.

So, family history is a powerful way in which we can connect with the histo-

**This historic building in Camden is known as Dr. Crookston's House, the connection with its well-known owner being a key part of its history. ([www.camdenhistory.org.au](http://www.camdenhistory.org.au))**



ry of a place and vice versa. The history of the area, the story of the buildings, the key events, all these can explain why our ancestors moved to a place, where and how they lived, and why they may have moved on. For example, many people from the mid-1850s onwards, including several of my ancestors, went in search of gold, moving on as prospects became more attractive elsewhere. My great great-grandfather William Glover, recruited from England as an engineer for the new railway lines, worked his way from Sydney to Bourke via Picton, so the history of railway construction is part of his story too.

Other families have mostly resided in the same place for many generations. Camden is one of those places where this is still happening for many local families. The local history is then much more closely intertwined with family history. If you listen to people's reactions to local history, they will often say, "one of my relatives worked there", "they lived in that building" or explain their family connection to an event, object, or place. History is more personal and accessible when it connects to your own family story.

Books on history can be brought to life if they are told from the perspective of a person or a family. Diaries, memoirs, and historical biographies illustrate how everyday people felt about the events of their lives. Even if the stories are not about your family, following the fortunes of real people who lived through major historical events connects us to that time in a more personal way.

History and family history go together, the study of each compliments the other. In some places, Family History Societies combine with Historical Societies and become one organisation. In other cases, they start as one and move apart. Sometimes both roles are within the local studies section of the library. In any case there is logic in keeping the different disciplines connect-





**Camden Museum and Camden Area Family History Society side by side in the Camden Library complex – John St Camden (Camden Area Family History Society Facebook page)**

ed but separate, something that I think we have achieved with the partnership between Camden Library, Camden Historical Society and Camden Area Family History Society.

I hesitated before I joined both the local societies as I don't have that local connection, none of my family ever lived in Camden before I did. I wondered if it would be relevant to me. It turned out that joining both Societies has been very rewarding. The Family History Society, while holding records on local families also has plenty of resources for those researching across Australia and around the world. And the stories of Camden's history and people are fascinating, often encompass broader issues, and are relevant to where I live now – a place I have come to love.



**Tony Jackson from the Camden Area Family History Society at the 35th Annual Conference of Family History Societies, at Knox Grammar School , Wahroonga, 11 October 2019 (CAFHS)**

So, if you are at all interested in where you came from, who your ancestors were, why your ancestors did what they did and how the world and their local community impacted their lives – come and visit us at family history. If you are interested in the heritage of this beautiful area, the buildings and places, the events and people visit the Museum and attend a meeting of the Historical Society. Or do what I have done and get involved with both!

# St John's GFS celebrates 50 years

**Anne McIntosh**

On Saturday 7 September 2019, Camden GFS (formerly Girls' Friendly Society) celebrated 50 years in Camden with a Thanksgiving Service and meal attended by around 200 people. Many girls who attended GFS continue to live nearby, but there were also a number of travellers from as far away as Tasmania.

## What is GFS?

The Girls' Friendly Society was founded in England in 1875 by Mary Townsend. This Anglican Church group aimed to give “maids and female domestic staff spiritual guidance and social activities for their days off”. In this early period, GFS was for girls over 14 years, but later this was extended to girls from eight years old.



**All GFS attendees 50th anniversary celebration, St John's Church Hall, September 2019 (N Hill)**



**Early GFS leaders – Betty Annabel, Lesley-Ann Hoskin (LHS) with original members – Vicki Shepard and Roslyn Tildsley (RHS) (N Hill)**

The aim was for young ladies of the upper and middle classes to reach out and provide role models for working class girls. The contacts and activities were particularly valuable to young servants who worked in smaller houses, where they were often away from their home towns and had no social ties. The Society also functioned in part as an employment agency. (To read more about GFS founding in England, see [http://anglicanhistory.org/women/money\\_gfs1911/](http://anglicanhistory.org/women/money_gfs1911/) )

The first local Australian branch was formed in Adelaide in 1879. The next year, Sydney's first branch was established at St Paul's in Redfern, then at St John's in Parramatta, and by 1901, there were branches in all states. In Australia, GFS aimed to facilitate friendship between ladies (Associates) and working girls (Members). The Associates would help find jobs for members and encourage them in 'Christian behaviour'. The organisation's motto was drawn from the Bible: *Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2).



**Mother and daughter makeup night, 1990s. Lisa Briggs, Neidra Hill, Fiona Bailliss. (N Hill)**

By 1886, there were 61 branches in the Sydney diocese, with a membership of 1018, which included 350 associates. The activities of local groups varied depending on the needs in that area. In those early days, branches generally held weekly meetings for working girls and several also ran hostels to provide them with accommodation. There was a GFS hostel close to the University of Sydney in Arundel Street.

Over the years, the focus for GFS changed, and membership was extended to younger girls. It remained a local outreach that linked girls who had strong ties to the church, with families that had limited links to their community. The organisation continued to expand and during the 1970s, most Anglican churches in Sydney had youth outreaches based around GFS and CEBS (Church of England Boys' Society).

GFS no longer focuses solely on girls. Since 2004, its stated aims have been 'to minister to children, youth and their families'. The strict uniform policy has evolved into a more casual organisational 'style', however over the years, GFS clothing has always been blue and white.

Despite the changes, the structure of the weekly meetings continues to draw





### **Group photo 1983**

**(back row, L->R) Neidra Hill, Cheryl Hunt, Rebekah Davis, Julia Mul-  
len**

**(Middle row/s) Kerry Sidman, Jodie Davis, Eleanor Flett, ?, ?, Alison  
Newport, Jacqui Richards, Kelly ?, Kelly ?**

**(front) Renee Wilson, Kirsty Miln, Katrina Sorenson, ?, Bronwyn Rich-  
ards, Kim Edwards, Jemima Flett**

**[Please assist to name the unknown children (?), and alert us to any  
names that are incorrect.] (N Hill)**

upon the goals and vision of Mary Townsend. The GFS motto and prayer are unchanged. There is an emphasis on broad Christian teaching, and the group welcomes girls irrespective of their faith background, helping to build confidence, contacts, self-esteem, independence and a broader vision of the world and its opportunities. The aim has always been to cement a welcoming peer group founded on kindness, peace and love.

### **GFS leadership in Camden**

GFS began in Camden in 1969 under the ministry of Rev. Barry Burgess. The first leader was his wife, Marcia, who was supported by Mrs Stewart. Later Betty Annabel, Betty Doran (now McKay), Doreen Thornton and Lesley-Ann Hoskin were leaders. Meetings were held in the church hall at the top of Hill

Street. Among those who attended on the first night were Vicki Shepard and Roslyn Tildsley. (who remains involved with GFS in the local area and nationally.)

In 1980, Neidra Hill, joined the team as branch leader. With her strong faith and love of sport and camping, she has played a significant (and ongoing role) over many years. Other leaders in the 1980s were Sue Owen, Barbara Hend and Roslyn Tildsley. Membership peaked during the 1980s, with around 60 girls attending each week.

Efforts were ongoing during the late 1980s to expand the leadership group, with GFS welcoming Debbie Bannister, Loraine Ryder, Corinna Edgar and Sue Storey. Ex-members who later became leaders included Renae Sharpe (now Copas) and Nicole Semler.



**Allan Hughes instructs Renae Sharpe. Abseiling at Cataract River Ranch, late 1980s (N Hill)**

Although this list is not comprehensive, others who have played a significant role in GFS at Camden include Sylvia Hansen, Jenny Goodhew, Kate Stevenson, Kay Hudson, Sharon Crocker, Colleen Jeffcott, Lauren Giles and Fiona Bailiss (now Drury).

## **Members**

Since the 1970s, GFS has met in the new church hall. Over the years, membership has fluctuated, but weekly attendance has been fairly consistent at around 30-40. Looking at surnames, members include many multi-generational Camden families, supplemented by a very international mix as later immigrants have joined the community. From its origins reaching out to



**Tegan Hudson (left) coordinates shepherds, St John's Nativity Play, 2000s (N Hill)**

the working class, GFS in Camden now looks towards its expanding multi-cultural community.

The girls are divided into three groups (Tedties, Juniors and Seniors) with age-appropriate activities, that might include crafts, games, cooking and adventure. As weekend commitments of children have grown, it has become a challenge to organise overnight adventures. In the 1970s and 1980s, GFS girls were exposed to bushwalking, caving at Bungonia National Park, hiking, abseiling, orienteering, bush cookery and camping. Singing around a campfire was always a highlight.

In the local area, there were also opportunities for canoeing and bike riding. These small group adventures would build teamwork and independence. At larger gatherings such as district and diocesan camps, the girls and leaders had opportunities to meet new people and share ideas.

GFS also contributed to church and community fundraising. At the AHI Flower Show in the 1980s, the group would enter flowers in the competitions and raise money by making and selling jams and chutneys. On another occasion, they raised money so that Rosie Benn, a church missionary based in



Mongolia, could establish art classes for the kids in her overseas community. The Camden community was very proud when Tegan Hudson was chosen to represent Australia as a Junior Delegate to the GFS World Council. Her selection came after a nationwide search and led her to a two-year commitment during which she travelled around the country visiting church groups. Tegan now lives in Tasmania and remains active in the church.

## **Amazing people**

Talking with Neidra Hill who does not have a daughter, but remains enthusiastic about GFS at 85yo, you understand the close relationship she has shared with “her girls” over many years. She speaks about the satisfaction of seeing girls develop in their Christian faith and become leaders, both within and beyond GFS.

The original idea of providing a safe environment where girls could be around other Christian women is evident today. Over time, the girls grow in self-awareness and build friendships beyond their school. GFS also provides opportunities for them to develop specific interests and skills, and professional contacts.

Neidra laughs aloud recalling a recent episode on camp. At the campsite, the leaders selected suitable sites and assisted the girls to raise their tents. The senior girls chose an alternative, ‘better’ position – “It’s flat, has no rocks and is closer to the toilets.” They raised their own tent, separate from the main group.

It wasn’t until they retired that those older girls realised that their carefully selected campsite was also beloved by bull ants. There were screams as the girls evacuated. Seeking assistance, they learnt that others were tired or too busy, and were told to “deal with it”. The girls had to deconstruct and move to a new site. According to Neidra, sometimes independence has a price! Those girls (and onlookers from the ‘poorly-sited’ tents) now have a great story to recount.

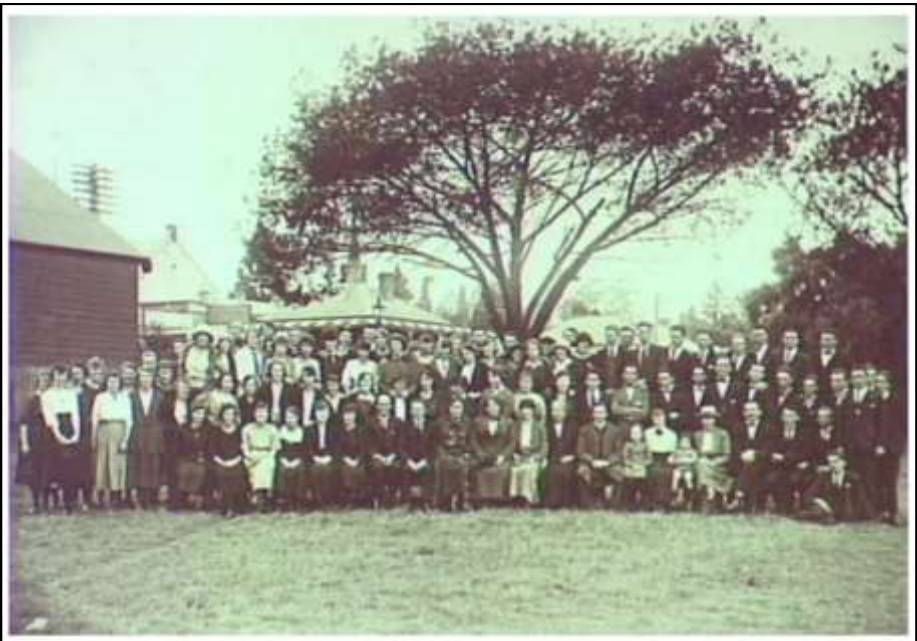
# **Trainee teachers Camden camp in 1924**

**Ian Willis**

Recently Rene at the Camden Museum posted an intriguing photograph taken at the Camden Showground on the Camden Museum Facebook page. It showed a large group of young men and women who were identified at trainee teachers from Sydney Teachers College.

Camden resident Peter Hammond asked on the Camden Museum Facebook page: Any idea why they were in Camden? The photograph is a bit of a mystery.

The photograph was contributed to the Camden Museum by John Donaldson and was taken in May 1924. The photograph shows 48 women, 34 men and 2 children.



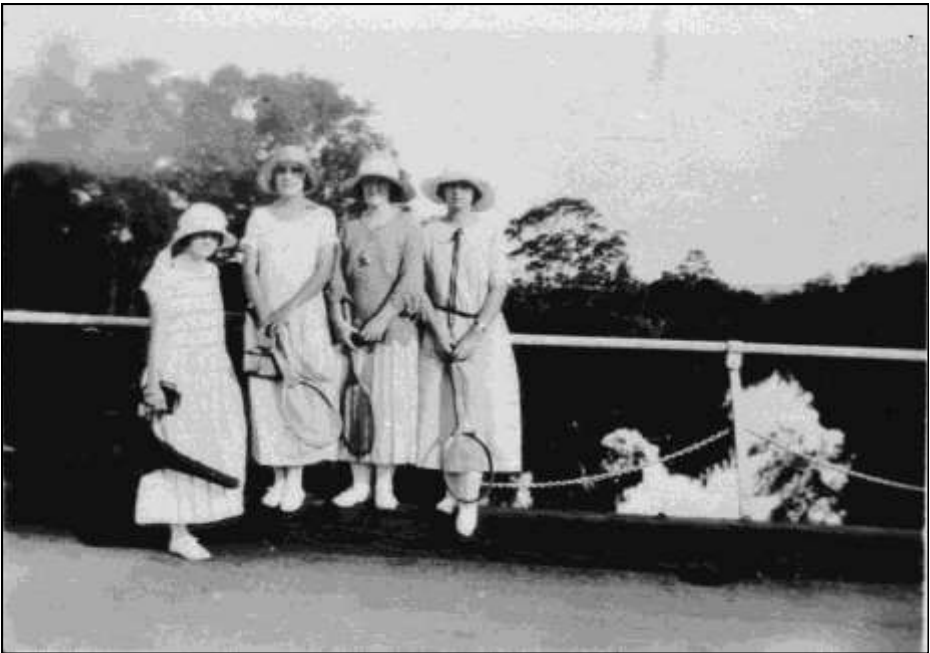
**The group photograph of the trainee teachers from Sydney Teachers College at Onslow Park adjacent to the Show Hall in 1924. This is the image that prompted the original question by Peter Hammond on the Camden Museum's Facebook page. (John Donaldson/CIPP)**

The photograph reveals more. You can see the spire of St Johns Church in the background and the absence of the 1938 brick front on the show hall. There are no brick and iron gates on the showground. The brick building at the corner of Argyle and Murray is yet to be built.

Photographs can tell so much about the past. They are a wonderful resource and this image provides much information about this mystery. So I set off on a journey to solve the mystery of the question about the photograph .

A quick search of the *Camden News* on Trove revealed that in May 1924 there was indeed a camp of trainee teachers who stayed at the Camden Agricultural Hall in Onslow Park. The report in the *Camden News* revealed more information.

*There are 109 students and some ten lecturers and authorities gathering, from the University Teachers' College. The students are obtaining practical*



**Trainee teachers from Sydney Teachers College at the 1924 Camden camp have a game of tennis in the local area on their recreation time (SLNSW)**

*knowledge by attending the different schools in the district, and much good should be the result. Those in charge are to be complimented on the excellent arrangements at the camp. (Camden News, 15 May 1924)*

So was this a one-off or is there more to the story?

Further digging reveals that the first camp was in 1921, there were two camps per year one in May and the second around August. There were between 70 and 100 trainee teachers at each camp and they attended a number of local schools during their stay. The camps seem to have been for about three weeks each. There appears to have lots of interaction between locals and the visitors with sporting events, dances, lectures, and lots of other activities.

The first camp in May 1921 seems to have been a big deal not only for the town but also for the AH&I Society. Following the First World War the finances of the AH&I Society were in a parlous state and the hall hire was a welcome boost to finances.

Camden was first graced with the presence of these bright eyed and bushy tailed budding young teachers in 1921 when 64 of them settled in for a week at the show hall. The Camden camp provided for them an opportunity to practise their teaching theory and practice of the New South Wales New Syllabus that they learnt in the classroom at Sydney Teacher's College. The 1921 trainees were all single and were made up of 49 women and 15 men and four weeks after the Camden camp were to be placed in schools. (*Camden News*, 12 May 1921)

The Sydney Teachers College trainees were allocated to schools across the local region and the list included: Camden, Campbelltown, Campbelltown South, Cawdor, Cobbitty, Glenfield, Ingleburn, Minto, Mount Hunter, Narellan and The Oaks. (*Camden News*, 12 May 1921)

The teaching practice visits were organised on a group basis and transport was either by train or bus. By end of their training course the students had had at least three weeks of practice teaching in teaching at rural schools. (*Sydney Mail*, 8 June 1921)

In 1920 the STC students had been based at Glenbrook and the success of the experiment encouraged the college to extend it to Camden. The venture, according to the Sydney press, was a first in Australia for teacher training and it was believed at the time to be a world first for such a camp. During the week



in Camden the camp was visited by the New South Wales Director of Education Peter Board and the chief inspector HD McLelland. (*Sydney Mail*, 8 June 1921)

In 1921 the party of 89, made up of students and lectures and their families, had arrived by train at Camden the previous Saturday afternoon. The group were put up the show hall with conversion to a dormitory and the construction of cubicles to accommodate the mixed sexes. The show pavilion was converted to a kitchen and dining area from 6am to 9am, and then again after 4pm. The Camden press reports stated that at these times 'the show ground was a scene of great activity'. (*Camden News*, 12 May 1921)

The Sydney Teachers College trainees had some time for recreation and in the evenings singing and games were organised between 7pm and 8pm by the music lecturer Miss Atkins, and the education lecturer Miss Wyse. Games and singing were held at the St Johns Parish Hall and sometimes the students organised tennis games. (*Camden News*, 12 May 1921)

Do you have any mysterious photographs that tell a great story about our local area?

# **The Rise and Rise of the Camden Museum Celebrating Fifty Years!**

**John Wrigley**

As the Camden Museum celebrates its first fifty years on June 20th this year, members and supporters might be interested to learn something of the story of the museum. The Museum is owned and operated by the Camden Historical Society and is located at 40 John Street, Camden, in a building owned by Camden Council as part of the Camden Library complex.

The Camden Historical Society was formed by a small group of local enthusiasts in 1957. The Society started with the support of several teachers from Camden High School and began holding its regular monthly meetings in a classroom at the High School. The meetings were held there for forty-three years until 2000.

At first the society had no collection of material or historic items but as the years progressed and the members became active in protecting the history of the area, documents, photographs and objects were collected and donated. The Camden High School kindly allowed one of its broom cupboards to be used initially to store such items and a number of Society members also kept things at their homes in storerooms and garages. Through the 1960s there was a rising call for there to be a place where the Society could have a small museum for visitors to come and see the growing collection of items from Camden's past.

In the late 1960s, thanks to a group of forward thinking volunteers, a plan was made for a Museum. The society's president, local pharmacist Colin Clark, was active in the Camden Rotary Club and worked with Alderman Bruce Ferguson to identify a room at the rear of the then Camden School of Arts (now the Camden Library) which council could make available for such a use. The council agreed and the Rotary Club adopted the establishment of the Camden Museum as its major project for 1969-70. This was under the Presidency of Noel Riordan, with Geoff McAleer as its hard working Community Services Director, supported by the entire membership of the Club. Other stalwarts of the Historical Society at that time included Owen and Nan Blattman, Miss Llewella Davies and Miss Nancy Freestone, among others. The new Museum was opened before a large assembled crowd on 20 June 1970 by Major General Sir Denzil Macarthur-Onslow as Patron of the Historical Society. As the new museum neared its opening the word went out that items were needed for the Museum. Many items that are in the collection

were donated at that time, including some of the “treasures” of the Museum. Camden artist and Rotary Club member Alan D. Baker donated a beautiful oil painting “Camden From the Grove” which has pride of place in the Museum reception area today. Many families made donations of beautiful china, trophies, Edison phonographs, furniture, tools and household equipment.

In 1970 Mr Owen Blattman became president and with his wife Nan, began twenty years of dedicated commitment and leadership to the Society and Museum. Owen had grown up in the Burragorang Valley and along with many people in the Camden area had been required to move out of the Valley for the building and filling of the Warragamba Dam. He came from an agricultural background and worked for many years in the field for Southwell Engineering, particularly with agricultural equipment.

Owen knew many people in the district and so was an effective gatherer of donations for the museum. These were significant years for the museum and many of the agricultural and domestic items came in at that time. The result of this success was predictable and in 1980 the museum, with council support, was extended to include the upstairs chamber of the old School of Arts building. Again the Camden Rotary Club worked hard to bring this about, led by president Ian Clifton and directors Fred Skinner and Leon Young.

In the 1990s with the rising interest in Australian heritage the museum continued to develop. The NSW Government Ministry for the Arts assisted museums to improve their level of professionalism and curating standards. The society obtained a large capital works grant and tripled the size of the museum with a large contribution from Camden Council and help from local donors and service clubs. Presidents John Wrigley and Peter Hayward worked with an enthusiastic committee to bring this development to completion in 1999. The voluntary contribution of honorary architect Richard Stringer was enormous and ensured a high standard for the project.

The redevelopment of the Camden Library and the former Camden Fire Station took place in 2007. About \$2.5 million was spent by Camden Council and the State Library of NSW to create a beautifully integrated library and heritage complex by joining the library, museum and former fire station with an elegant and light-filled galleria. The museum now has much higher standard of fire-safety than previously, and also has a lift to give access to its upper floor for disabled visitors. The Camden Area Family History Society now has a room adjacent to the museum. The redevelopment of the library has resulted in an excellent partnership and shared usage of the building. Co-operation between the library, the historical society and the family history society is very productive. The galleria is able to be used for book launches and visiting speakers by all three groups.





**Two enthusiastic Camden Historical Society members, Frances Warner and husband Harry, outside the Camden Museum after a recent Australia Day parade in 2018. They were both dressed for the occasion. Both of these local identities have engaging and interesting tales to tell of the local area that are all part of the Camden Story. (CHS)**

The earliest written record of the arrival of donated items is in a small red-covered exercise book which is still in the collection along with other early catalogue records. A card catalogue was prepared by Nancy Freestone, Frank Hammond and Reg Cole in the 1970s. In the 1990s the first computer catalogue was keyboarded by Rhonda Reynolds, Julie Wrigley and Peter Mylrea. The Mosaic system was adopted in 2000 and the earlier data was transferred across to the new system. In the 2000s-2010s John and Julie Wrigley extended the Mosaic catalogue information on collection items and their donors. As much provenance as possible has been gathered during that time.

Through the active seeking of relevant items for the museum, some very interesting personal collections have been gathered into the collection over the years. The development of a collecting policy in the 1980s has guided collection activities since that time and a number of items have been de-accessioned according to the policy. The following is a listing of the major personal or themed sub-collections in the overall collection. The listing is alphabetical and therefore not in order of importance or significance.

### **Blattman Collection**

Owen Blattman OAM and his wife Nan Blattman nee Daniels, were the public face of the Camden Historical Society and its museum for many years in the 1970s and 1980s. Owen was president for 21 years and Nan was secretary for a lot of that time.

### **Clark Collection**

This collection of letters home and souvenirs from World War One by Private Cecil Clark was donated by his niece in 2009. It is a very complete set of correspondence from Clark in which reference is made to various items of poignant war battle souvenirs sent home by him and now in the collection.

### **Crookston Collection**

These 30 items relate to the Camden medical doctor Dr Robert Melville Crookston, his wife Zoe and daughters Suzanne and Jacqueline. Almost all the items were donated by Jacqueline Crookston or came to the museum from her estate after her death. Significant items are Dr Crookston's OBE medal, the De Groot-made casket and two letters, the Charles I silver spoon, Miss Crookston's set of 5 World War Two medals and 2 silk World War Two maps, several items of quality jewellery and a scrapbook.

### **Davies Collection**

Miss Llewella Davies OAM was an enthusiastic foundation member of both Camden Historical Society and its museum and was a great advocate for heritage conservation in the Camden area. Her collecting and donations led to over 160 items coming into the collection, making her the most prolific single donor for the museum. Significant items are her OAM medal, extensive badge collection, silver and pewter collection, photographs, telescope and Chinese abacus. Many other items were donated by others at the encouragement of Llewella.

### **Feld Collection**

Barry Feld OAM was a very popular Camden Council employee and later alderman. He was the editor of an independent local newspaper 'The Crier' for some years and also played the voluntary role of Camden's Town Crier complete with tricorne hat, green coat, white breeches, black shoes and white



**The interior of the Camden Museum on a recent Australia Day. The many exhibits and artefacts on display all have tales to tell that make up the patina of the Camden Story. These all contribute to place making, the construction of community identity and a sense of place. (CHS)**

horse. He loved sports, story-telling and good company. His widow Gaylene generously donated all his medals and awards to the museum. Items include his OAM medal, National Medal and his participant's medal from the 1956 Olympic Games when he carried the Olympic torch through Camden.

### **Ferguson Collection**

Alderman Bruce Ferguson OAM was a highly respected Camden citizen. He was an elected alderman on Camden Council for over 20 years and its mayor for many terms. He was a member and Patron of the Camden Historical Society. As mayor he was instrumental in the establishment of the museum with the assistance of Camden Council.

### **Hodge Collection**

Ben Hodge was a watchmaker and jeweller in Argyle Street Camden and was secretary of the Camden Hospital for several decades. He held numerous other public offices in Camden. He donated 29 items and a number of significant early photos of the area and its people. Items include his wife's

wedding dress, baby's sterling silver rattle, sovereign case, seven pocket watches, spectacles, telescope, binoculars, optometrist's kit of test lenses, hospital collection boxes, Show Society ballot box and the Camden Show wall clock.

### **Indigenous Collection**

The collection of over 80 indigenous items in the Camden Museum is thought to be the largest in south west Sydney. It consists of mainly stone axes, cutting tools, flakes, boomerangs, woomeras, shields, photos, a message stick and a brass breastplate.

### **Johnson Collection**

Miss Janice Johnson was an active member of the Camden Historical Society from the 1990s to her death in 2017. In her will she left a number of items for the museum and research papers and a generous amount of money to the Society for specific purposes. These included the placement of plaques on nominated graves and the publishing of her unpublished draft manuscripts on Camden history.

### **Kernohan Collection**

The former mayor and local state Member of Parliament, Dr. Liz Kernohan, was one of the district's best known and most popular citizens when she died suddenly in 2004. She had associated herself with a huge number of local organisations during her life. After her death her close friend and estate executor, Nance Cottle, agreed to donate all of Liz's medals, awards and many personal items to the museum to honour her remarkable contribution to public life in Camden.

### **Library**

An important feature of the museum is the reference library which is computer-catalogued and can be used by visitors to the museum. It is a specialist library which contains only material which is relevant to the history of the Camden district. The rarer and more valuable books are kept in the locked book cabinet.

### **Macarthur-Onslow Collection**

The history of the Macarthur-Onslow family is a major integral part of the history of the Camden district. At one time the Macarthur family owned most of the district and employed most of the people. The family members have associated themselves with all aspects of the district's development. The family provided a lot of interest for the newspapers and social magazines. As a consequence the collection of the museum includes lots of books, photos, documents, souvenirs of events, speeches, plans, newspaper and magazine articles, Camden Park House items and uniforms relating to the

family. The family have supported the museum from when it opened and made donations to assist the museum to advance.

### **Mariott Collection**

Lou and Marion Mariott were a popular Camden/Catherine Fields couple who supported the museum, donating 31 items including a small but choice decorative collection of English sterling silver domestic items which had come from Marion's side of the family.

### **McCrae Collection**

The well known bohemian poet, artist and writer Hugh McCrae OBE came from Melbourne but married a Camden woman, Annie 'Nancy' Adams. From time to time in the 1930s-50s Hugh lived in River Road Elderslie and his writings include references to Elderslie grape vines, St John's spire, Camden hotelkeepers and fellow hotel patrons. He often illustrated his letters to relatives and friends. The museum holds several letters from him to Camden identities Colin Clark and Llewella Davies.

### **Medal Collection**

The museum has encouraged the donation of various medals by local families where there are no obvious family descendants to care for them and where the items will help to tell 'the story of Camden'. The museum now has an extensive collection of medals for war, peace, honours, coronations, royal jubilees, schools, agricultural shows, religions, royal visits, fire brigade, bi-centennial and other anniversaries, from many separate donors.

The medal holdings of the museum are extraordinarily fine for a small museum and are a measure of the community spirit of the district that so many have been donated.

### **Nixon Collection**

Richard Nixon OAM was a lifelong resident of Camden who acquired a vast knowledge of the history of the district. He was renowned for his guided tours, history talks, radio talks, and newspaper columns. He was the director of the Camden museum and president of the Camden Historical Society in the 1990s. The upper exhibition chamber is named the Nixon Room in his honour.

### **O'Farrell Collection**

Brendan O'Farrell is a local history teacher and collector who has taken a keen interest in improving the museum collection. In the 1990s-2010s he collected and then generously donated over 100 items to the collection. These included original documents relating to Lord Camden and Evan Nepean, many Camden souvenirs, medals relevant to Camden and other collectables. With his knowledge he has been able to give advice on the significance of

other items in the collection.

### **Ray Collection**

Milton Ray was a Camden motor mower businessman and a long-time worker for the museum. He was a volunteer fireman with the Camden town fire brigade. He was on the management committee and a vice-president of the Society for several decades. He was a very practical person and a man of few words. He used his skills to build things, mend things and gather donations of photos, aircraft equipment, fire fighting equipment, tools and metal toys for the museum. His wife Elaine supported Milton in all these activities and was herself the secretary and treasurer of the Camden Historical Society at times in the 1960s.

### **Red Cross Collection**

The Camden Branch of the Australian Red Cross was formed when World War One began. It quickly became the most effective charity in Camden and continued as a strong force for philanthropy and caring for people in need. At times it had hundreds of members and was at its most active during the two world wars. It celebrated its centenary in 2014 and the Camden Historical Society used a Federal Government grant to mount an exhibition to demonstrate the great local commitment to the cause over those hundred years.

### **Sidman Coin Collection**

The Sidman family came to Camden in the 1890s when William Sidman purchased the Camden News newspaper and the family has lived here for several generations. George Sidman was the editor in the 1930s and was also a keen coin collector. After his death his executors and the family decided to donate his coin collection to the museum.

### **Smith Collection**

The poignant story of Reginald Sydney 'Rex' Smith, his wife Amelia and daughter Ida and son Rex, is one of the most powerful in the history of Camden. It involves happiness, tragedy, suicide, Gallipoli, war battle death and the story of two orphans raised by two different families. The photo of the handsome, confident Australian Light Horseman is a haunting one, being taken in South Africa before the family tragedies came to pass. The collection includes a set of original hand-written letters from the Boer War from Rex to his brother Archie describing in detail the army exploits. His important medals from both wars and his Memorial Plaque are significant items in the museum collection.

### **Tools Collection**

One of the strongest collections in the museum is of practical tools donated by a wide range of donors. These are to do with agriculture, carpentry,

plumbing, bricklaying, cutting, sharpening, gardening, mining, masonry, blacksmithing, leatherworking and boot-making. Some of the tools are from the German vigneron of Elderslie and from the Chinese market gardeners along the Nepean River.

### **West Collection**

This collection is a crucial one for the museum. From 1901 until his sudden death in 1932 Dr. Francis West and his family were at the centre of the Camden community. They literally lived at the centre of town in the historic home Macaria 37 John Street. Dr West was the highly regarded and much-loved general practitioner who died in his prime at the age of 58. The upper-middle class family was involved in the full range of local activities: medical, hospital, church, social, sport, and the show. The family left Camden soon after his death but retained an interest in the town and contact with their friends. When his two elderly unmarried daughters died in the 2000s Dr West's granddaughter, Virginia West, offered the museum their extensive archive of objects, documents, photos, and a scrapbook. The archive provides a good understanding of the social structure of Camden over those years.

### **World Banknote Collection**

The Museum has an anonymous donor and generous citizen of Camden to thank for this collection. For many years his hobby was collecting banknotes and studying their history. In 2016 he donated his extensive world banknote collection to the Camden Historical Society saying that Camden had been very good to him and that he wished to support the Camden Museum with this gift.

### **Conclusion**

As well as the collections described above there are many sub-collections of items. These can be found in the 'Mosaic' computer catalogue by calling them up by classifications. There are at present about 4000 items in the museum catalogued collection. The museum is strong in the areas of photographs, coins and banknotes, vertical subject files, books, maps, plans, artworks, tools, bottles, badges, domestic equipment, geological specimens, health and medical equipment, irons, smoking equipment, clothing, recreational/sports equipment, photographic equipment, dairying equipment, phonographs/record playing equipment, communications equipment and commemorative ware.

All are invited to come to the Camden Museum on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June for an Afternoon Tea from 2 to 5 p.m. to join in the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary.

