

# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

Journal of the Camden Historical Society



**September 2024 Volume 5 Number 8**

# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

Journal of the Camden Historical Society Inc.

ISSN 1445-1549

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Meetings are held at 7.00 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. 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** Neidra Hill receiving AM for Services to Youth in 2000. (Neidra Hill)

**Rear Cover** Unlock Camden 2023 cut-out figure at the front of the Camden Museum Library building in John Street. (C Cagney)

# CAMDEN HISTORY

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# Celebrating the life of Neidra Hill AM

## Kellee Cordina

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024, the town of Camden was brought to a halt to honour the life of Neidra Hill AM, who passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday 31st July. Neidra's funeral service was held at her beloved St John's Church Camden, commencing at 10:30am and attended by over 700 people at St John's and 'The Neidra Hill Centre' Cowpasture Reserve softball field, where the service was also live streamed.

In the days following Neidra's passing, tributes in her honour flowed online and around the district. It was evident to all, that this amazing lady was well respected, deeply loved and would be sadly missed by the Macarthur community. Neidra's life was remarkable and the impact she had on such a large volume of people, was a true testament to her faith and dedication to the community.



**Neidra Hill playing softball at Newcastle Teachers College in 1955  
(Neidra pictured on the right) (Neidra Hill)**

Neidra Meave Hill was born on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1935 in Cessnock, New South Wales, to parents James and Elsie. Her childhood years were spent growing up in Nelson Bay with her younger siblings; Coral, Avril and James. Neidra attended the local Nelson Bay Primary School before her acceptance into Newcastle Girls High School.

Following high school, Neidra attended Newcastle Teachers College in 1954 and 1955, where in 1955 she was Vice President. Neidra was extremely active, passionate and talented at sport. Representing numerous sporting teams, she was awarded Honours Blue in Sport. Neidra excelled in particular at hockey and softball, developing a love for these two sports which would span the next six decades.

Graduating from Newcastle Teachers College, Neidra's first placement in 1956 was as an infant's teacher at Quakers Hill Primary School. Completing two years at Quakers Hill, she was appointed to Granville Central Infants where she remained until 1964. Following Granville her teaching roles included; Corowa Primary School, Mt Austin Primary School in Wagga Wagga, Guise Primary School before arriving in Camden to teach at Camden South Primary School from 1974 to 1977.

It was in 1975 that Neidra moved into 'Ben Linden' Narellan, initially renting the home with friends. In 1977 the opportunity was made available to purchase 'Ben Linden'. Neidra, along with two friends purchased the home, which at the time was run down and required much tender loving care. They set about repairing and restoring the home to its former glory. 'Ben Linden' remained Neidra's home for 49 years, where she was eventually the sole owner and considered herself the custodian of this beautiful historic home. Neidra was a passionate historian and active supporter of preserving our local history.

Neidra's teaching career led her to Leppington Primary School in 1978, where she was appointed assistant principal and remained until 1990. Neidra retired from school teaching in 1990, however was never far from a classroom, as she commenced scripture teaching in the local Camden and Narellan district primary schools. In 2024 Neidra was teaching nine classes a week of scripture, some of these including children whose parents she had once taught.

The most dramatic change in Neidra's life occurred in 1959, where her passions and focus for the future were redirected. At the age of 24, she attended the Billy Graham Crusade to hear the famous evangelist. Dedicating her life to Christ, this awakened a passion in Neidra for children and their welfare which would begin her ministry in GFS (Girls Friendly Society) – a world-



### **Neidra and the Sportz Braves Softball Club (Neidra Hill)**

wide Anglican church ministry. Neidra was involved with GFS for over 64 years, taking on the role of leader at many churches including; St Mark's Granville, Corowa Anglican, Mt Austin Wagga, St Luke's Liverpool and for over 50 years at St John's Camden.

Sport was another interest. From a young age Neidra was a gifted player with a special love for hockey and softball. She also enjoyed other sports such as gymnastics in her earlier years and cricket, which later she played for Sydney YWCA.

Neidra's love of softball began as a competitor, evolving over the years to include coaching, umpiring and the role of president at the many clubs and



**Neidra and the St John's Church Girls Friendly Society (GFS) Caving Camp, 1995 (Neidra Hill)**

associations she formed. From 1956 to 1965, Neidra was an A Grade player for the Red Sox Softball Club, Sydney. In 1958 and 1960 she was selected into the NSW Open Women's Softball State Team. Each town she graced with her presence, she shared her love for softball founding the White Sox Softball Club, Wagga Softball Assoc., Nepean Women's Softball Assoc., later known as Camden Softball Assoc., which then became the Macarthur District Softball Assoc. From 1975 to 1998 she was the president of Wanderers Softball Club, before founding the Narellan Sports Softball Club in 2006, which later became known as Sportz Braves Softball Club. She remained president of Sportz Braves up until her passing in July 2024. Her dedication to softball in the Macarthur district was honoured with life membership of the Macarthur District Softball Assoc., Life membership of Wanderers Softball Club and the naming of 'The Neidra Hill Centre' at the Cowpasture Reserve softball field in Camden.

Neidra's equal love of hockey saw similar achievements for her dedication to this sport. From 1956 to 1964 Neidra played with Evergreens Hockey Club, Sydney and captained the City 2 Representative Team. In 1967 she played with the Corowa Ladies Hockey Club, 1968 she was an A Grade player for Wagga Wagga Hockey Assoc. and also played in the Open Ladies Rep Team. In 1973 Neidra played with the Malachite A Grade Ladies Team in Camden,

before founding the Skylarks Hockey Club in 1975 where she was president till 2006. In 1991 she was instrumental in developing the Macarthur Hockey Complex in Narellan. In 2017, Neidra was honoured to have the hockey field in Narellan named after her, the 'Neidra Hill Field'. Her passion for hockey included her coaching children and umpiring games until 2020.

Neidra's dedication to sport in the Macarthur district, was recognised in 1986 when she was named Sportsperson of the Year in the Camden Council Australia Day Awards. Neidra was recognised over many decades with other special awards including; a childcare award in 1990 to celebrate Children's Week, Senior Sportsperson of the Year in 1994 in the Camden Council Australia Day Awards, receiving an Australian Sports Medal in 2000 and in 2008 to her surprise she discovered she had been nominated for the Australian of the Year Award.

In Neidra's service to the community, one ministry close to her heart was the Anglican Youth Department 'Camp Howard'. Neidra was long-time Director of various 'Camp Howard' camps, for a total of 42 years and served many years as a Counsellor. It was a combination of her work with 'Camp Howard', GFS, and her dedication to her local softball and hockey clubs, that led to her receiving the distinguished honour of being awarded an Australian Medal for Services to Youth (AM) in 2000. Attending the award ceremony with her family, this was a particularly humbling moment for Neidra. Neidra never sought recognition for her work and selflessly served her community. With her caring nature, she was always helping those in need and enjoyed bringing happiness to others. For many years, Neidra offered hospitality in her home, providing a safe haven when needed.

To describe Neidra Hill in one word – 'extraordinary' comes to mind. Losing an individual as highly respected and valued as Neidra Hill, has left a hole in the community which will be hard to fill. Neidra has been described in many ways upon her passing; legend, sporting giant, mentor and role model. However, in her humbled and true Neidra style, I believe she would be mostly pleased with the title of servant of Christ and true friend to all. In reflecting on Neidra's life, we can take inspiration from the legacies she leaves behind and strive to bring joy, respect and love to our local community, in the same way Neidra has for her extremely full and positive 88 years of life.

**Ben Linden, Narellan. (John Kooyman  
1997, Camden Images)**



# Government Savings Bank: Camden Branch

**Dianne Matterson**

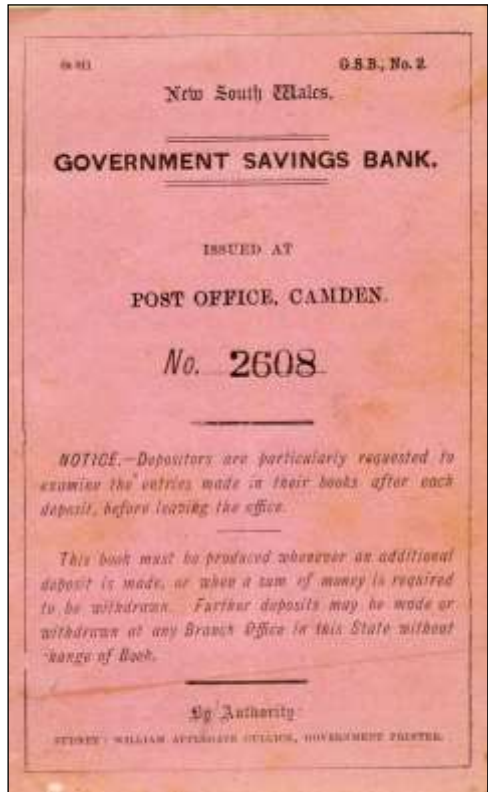
## **Prelude**

By 1870, despite strong consumer demand for easy access to convenient banking services, the Savings Bank of NSW only had 16 branches throughout the state and was prevented from expansion due to the legislation under which it had been established. Consequently, the NSW Government founded the Government Savings Bank of NSW in April 1871 by an Act of Parliament; the bank commenced business on 1<sup>st</sup> September that year and utilised the infrastructure of the postal system to provide customers with access to their accounts. The new bank was established in competition with the older Savings Bank of NSW, which was first named the NSW Savings Bank (commonly known as Campbell's Bank) but was replaced by the Savings Bank of NSW in 1832. This latter bank should not be confused with the Bank of NSW (now known as Westpac) that was established in 1817.

The initial regulations of the Government Savings Bank were widely publicised and indicate how much responsibility for the bank's accounts was placed on the shoulders of the postal system:

- Deposits were entered into a numbered passbook by the Post Office official and confirmed by the date stamp of his office. The depositor also signed the deposit book held by the Post Office. The deposit amount was reported to the Postmaster General (PMG) in Sydney, who immediately transmitted a formal receipt to the depositor. If the depositor didn't receive the receipt within 20 days, he/she had to apply again to the PMG.
- Married women could make deposits, which would be repaid to them upon request unless their husband gave the PMG notice in writing of the marriage and asked for payment to be made to him. The PMG had the authority to pay the money to either party, as he thought 'proper', except in cases where a protection order had been granted to the wife, in which case she had to produce the original order or a certified copy.
- On the anniversary of the day on which the first deposit was made, every account holder had to forward their passbook to the PMG in an envelope obtained from any Government Savings Bank, so the entries could be compared with those in the books of the PMG and for accrued interest to be added to the depositor's book. No postage was required.
- No charge was made for the first deposit book or for a continuation book, but if a new one was required due to loss, the depositor had to apply to the PMG, enclosing postage stamps to the value of one shilling.

- Depositors wanting to withdraw all or part of their deposit applied to the PMG – via a form obtained from any Government Savings Bank – specifying their occupation and residence, the number of the book, name of the office at which the first deposit was made, the sum to be withdrawn and the Post Office at which they wished to receive the money. A warrant for the amount required, payable at the office named, was then sent to the depositor by post. By the same post, the Postmaster at the relevant Post Office was advised of the warrant's issue. The depositor presented the warrant together with their deposit book at the Post Office, so that the withdrawal could be recorded, and confirmed with a date stamp and the signature of the postal clerk. The depositor signed the receipt attached to the warrant.



### 1905 Passbook Government Savings Bank (Camden Museum)

- Withdrawals could only be given to the account holder in person, or to the bearer of an order signed by the depositor in the presence of a clergyman, a JP, or, in the event of sickness, a medical attendant.
- If a depositor died leaving an account of £50 or less, and probate or letters of administration were not received within two months of death, the PMG was authorised to use discretion to divide the funds amongst the deceased's widow and/or relatives according to the Statute of Distributions. If the amount in the account was greater than £50, the money could only be paid to an executor or administrator. If the depositor was illegitimate, and they died intestate, the PMG applied to the Attorney-General for written authority to pay the money to those people who, in the opinion of the PMG, would have been entitled to the money had the depositor been of legitimate birth.
- If a depositor was declared to be of 'unsound mind', the PMG was authorised to use his discretion to make payments out of the depositor's

account, to any person he thought ‘proper’.<sup>1</sup>

The headquarters of the bank opened in Moore Street (now part of Martin Place) leading to the bank often being referred to as the Moore Street Bank. In 1906, control of the Government Savings Bank was passed from the state’s Reserve Bank Treasury to a Board of Commissioners. Over the next few years, the remit of the bank expanded to include home savings and home loans sections, as well as an ‘Advances’ department, which later became the genesis of the Rural Bank.<sup>2</sup>

### **Camden’s branch opens**

The Government Savings Bank announced its intention to open a branch in Camden that would operate as an agency at Camden Post Office from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1871. This agency was one of 30 that were opened at this time, but by the end of December, a further 22 branches had opened throughout the state. By this stage, there were four Government Savings Bank accounts held at Camden Post Office with a total balance of £34/9/9. For 42 years, the cumbersome agency system saw money and book entries passing backwards and forwards between the customer, the PMG and the local Post Office, and the bank’s Moore Street Headquarters. However, this process came to a sudden halt when the federally-owned Commonwealth Bank (established in 1911) announced their intention of using the former colonial Post Offices as nationwide banking agencies from January 1913. Consequently, the postal infrastructure was no longer available to the state-owned Government Savings Bank. This made it difficult for Government Savings Bank customers to deposit or withdraw money as they now had to appear in person at the bank’s headquarters in Moore Street. As a result, the establishment of a state-wide Government Savings Bank branch structure became a necessity if the bank was to survive. Just before the opening of the new Camden branch in September 1912, a bank agency had been arranged with Ben Hodge, a local jeweller, before it was realised that the amount of Government Savings Bank business generated by the Camden district was such that the establishment of a ‘bricks and mortar’ branch was required.<sup>3</sup>

Until Camden’s new Government Savings Bank building was ready, a front room of 112-116 Argyle Street, occupied by the butcher, Joseph Wasson, was rented as a temporary bank office in October 1912, with Kyle Flower as Manager. Customers were asked to transfer their accounts to the Camden branch by taking their passbook to the new branch and signing a form. The new local branch provided customers with great convenience as a withdrawal could be paid immediately, rather than having to work its way through the postal system as before. The Camden branch accepted deposits up to £500 and paid 3½% interest on balances between £1 and £300 and 3% interest for balances between £301 and £500. Travellers could withdraw up to £10 per

day at any branch in the state, £3 per day in smaller settlements that had an agency similar to the arrangement originally proposed with Ben Hodge, or £20 via telegraph. The Camden branch of the Government Savings Bank was open for deposits and withdrawals from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Monday-Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. – noon, but deposits could only be made in multiples of one shilling. By November 1912, low interest loans were available to farmers and settlers for amounts of £50 – £2,000 for periods of up to 30 years.<sup>4</sup>



**1917 photo of Government Savings Bank (110 Argyle Street) (Camden Images)**

The Government Savings Bank moved from Wasson’s ‘front room’ into the new premises next door at 110 Argyle Street, a property that was owned by James Noakes who had purchased it from Ebenezer Simpson in 1884. Photos taken of the building between 1914-1918, show the architecture of the building to be typical of the era.<sup>5</sup>

### **Managers and a merger**

In May 1913, Frank Pfeiffer was appointed Manager of the Camden branch of the Government Savings Bank, and a year later, after seven attempted mergers with the Savings Bank of NSW dating from 1881, government legislation was finally passed in 1914 allowing for the dissolution of the Savings Bank of NSW and the passing of its assets, including £8,535,266 of depositors’ balances, to the Government Savings Bank. The amalgamation resulted in the Government Savings Bank becoming the second largest savings bank in the British Empire behind the Post Office Savings Bank of the United Kingdom. Frank Pfeiffer was transferred to Sydney and Athol Tindal arrived in Camden to take over as Manager<sup>6</sup> at a time when the bank was riding high on its success; by November 1914, deposits from all branches in the state exceeded withdrawals by £1,419,213. By February 1915, 1,216 Camden residents had accounts with the bank and had collective deposits of £74,644/5/7. In 1917, Athol Tindal was promoted and replaced by Earl Prince as Manager. Prior to leaving, Mr Tindal was presented with gifts by the Camden Literary and Debating Society and the Camden Union Tennis Club.<sup>7</sup>

## **Land purchase**

In October 1919, George Furner, a timber merchant, applied to Camden Council to subdivide his land at 118-120 Argyle Street that was occupied by Robert Pinkerton and Messrs. Doust & Co. (now occupied by Vinnies, Coutts Lawyers and others). It was his intention to sell the corner to the Government Savings Bank. The bank authorities intended demolishing the existing wooden shops on the site and building a 'modern structure' for the occupation of the bank. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 1920, the indenture was signed recording the sale of the corner of George Furner's allotment to the bank. The Commissioners of the Government Savings Bank paid £900 for land that had a 33' (10m) frontage to Argyle Street and was 84' (25.5m) deep with an eastern boundary that lay along the John Street building line.<sup>8</sup>

## **Rural Bank**

In 1920, new legislation allowed the creation of a special department within the Government Savings Bank for the granting of overdrafts to agricultural and pastoral producers who often had difficulty obtaining loans from other banks. It was proposed to use the existing structure of the Advances Department of the bank, thus making it an extension of that department; known as the Rural Bank Department it had the specific aim of supporting farmers, particularly during challenging times such as drought. Consequently, money would only be lent by the Rural Bank to farmers or industries associated with primary production. The Rural Bank also organised programmes to educate those involved in the agricultural industry, aiming to improve productivity and enhance animal health. To fund the Rural Bank, debentures were issued for purchase by investors, while accounts and fixed deposits from the public were also accepted. In June 1921, the Camden branch of the Rural Bank opened as a 'department' of the Government Savings Bank, but retained a separate identity to that of its 'parent' bank. By this stage, the Camden branch of the Government Savings Bank had 1,931 accounts that held collective deposits of £105,085/17/5; during the 1920/21 financial year, the local customers withdrew a total of £91,011/11/7 from their accounts.<sup>9</sup>

## **Repairs and rebuilding**

By the early 1920s, the building at 110 Argyle Street was needing more frequent repairs. Between 1920-1924, repairs to the roof, walls and other unspecified works were undertaken on five occasions by Furner Bros. and Peters & Son at a total cost of £8/9/5.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps it was this ongoing expenditure that stirred the bank to activate a plan that been first talked of 5 years previously. By the time Percy Johnson had replaced Earl Prince as Manager at Camden in July 1924, plans for a new branch building on the former Furner land were well in hand.<sup>11</sup> Having purchased the allotment on the corner of the John-Argyle Street intersection from George Furner in 1919, the bank paid £300 for an adjoining piece of land measuring 33' x 38' (10m x 11.5m)



**1930 photo of Government Savings Bank (118 Argyle Street) (Camden Images)**

at the rear of its existing holding in December 1924. This gave the bank land a total John Street frontage of 122' (37m).<sup>12</sup> By June 1925, it was announced that Messrs. Welch Bros. were the successful tenderers for the erection of the new Government Savings Bank and Rural Bank building, which was expected to cost about £4,500. Work was due to begin in mid-June and was contracted to be completed by the end of November. The two-storey building included 'up-to-date banking chambers', a manager's office and residence, and, in a sign of the changing times, a car garage. Soil that was removed for the building's foundations was repurposed by Camden Council as fill for the 'depressions' and erosion in Broughton Street. When the Rural/Government Savings Bank opened, customers were offered 4% interest on savings up to £500 and 3½% for savings of £501 – £1,000. The new brick bank provided accommodation for the manager and his family on the first floor, the rear section 'stepped in' from the building line of the front portion, while a cantilevered awning protected the Argyle Street façade and the main entrance. An upstairs verandah was accessed from the residence and had 4 arched openings overlooking Argyle Street and an arched opening at each end, while a white parapet finished with horizontal decorative moulding encircled the front section of the building.<sup>13</sup>

## Great Depression

Unaware that a catastrophic economic downturn was looming, in April 1928, the Government made £25,000 available via the Rural Bank to assist the dairy industry to fund rural developments such as pasture improvement and fodder conservation. The Government Savings Bank also advised customers that they could save for a specific purpose by establishing a ‘Lay-By Account’ with a specific target amount stated in the contract. This allowed the customer to keep these funds separate to their other savings; withdrawals from the account could not be made until the ‘target’ amount had been reached at which point the money was transferred into either an ordinary savings account with the Government Savings Bank or a fixed term deposit with the Rural Bank.<sup>14</sup> By 1931, the disastrous economic impacts of the Great Depression were widespread and were permeating the liquidity of individuals and organisations alike, and the Government Savings Bank was not immune to these troubles. It was soon in financial difficulties and was quickly losing the public’s confidence. The bank suspended payments on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1931 after a protracted ‘run on the bank’ by depositors. The NSW Premier, Jack Lang, wrote to the Board of the federally-owned Commonwealth Bank of Australia asking them to consider taking over the Government Savings Bank. An amalgamation agreement between the two banks was finally reached on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1931 and on 15<sup>th</sup> December, all Government Savings Bank branches were rebranded as Commonwealth Bank branches. Customers received a new Commonwealth Bank passbook with their account balance intact, and could withdraw up to 10% of their balance if they wished. If customers were restrained during the early days of the merger, the Commonwealth Bank anticipated that they would be able to make the remainder of a customer’s account balance available to them ‘within a minimum period’.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

And what of the Rural Bank? As a subsidiary of the Government Savings Bank, the Rural Bank became collateral damage and was required to cease trading for some time before being absorbed into the Commonwealth Bank as a separate entity. By 1937, it had a large enough customer base in Camden to warrant the construction of its own local banking facilities independent of the Commonwealth Bank. In May of that year, authorities issued the plans and specifications for a new two-storey bank at 115-119 Argyle Street<sup>16</sup> – a building that is now occupied by a variety of businesses including Marsden’s Law Group and De Juliis Hair. The building at 110 Argyle Street that housed the former Government Savings Bank was demolished long ago – possibly in the 1930s – and in its place is a brick building occupied today by My Property Consultants. After the Commonwealth Bank at 118-120 Argyle Street underwent a 1953 upgrade, the laneway that originally gave vehicular access to George Furner’s timber yard was purchased by the bank in the 1980s, resulting in a frontage that increased from 33’ (10m) to 47’ (14m). This enlarged

site now accommodates the more recent building that currently occupies the land.

## Notes

1. *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 2 September 1871
2. Reserve Bank of Australia: Series Guides – Government Savings Bank of NSW; Series Guides – Savings Bank of NSW. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1920
3. Reserve Bank of Australia: ‘Origins of the Reserve Bank of Australia’. NSW Government Gazette: 22 September 1871, Issue 232, p.2117. *Evening News*, 9 December 1871. *Camden News*, 5 September 1912.
4. *Camden News*, 5 September 1912; 17, 24, 31 October 1912; 21 November 1912
5. NSW Land Registry Services: Book 220 #983, [General Register of Deeds – Old System Deeds]; Book 294 #658 [General Register of Deeds – Old System Deeds]. Camden Images: CHS0450
6. Reserve Bank of Australia: Series Guide – Government Savings Bank of NSW; Series Guide – Savings Bank of NSW. *Camden News*, 15 May 1913; 30 April 1914; 22 October 1914; 5 November 1914
7. *Camden News*, 19 November 1914; 4 February 1915; 11, 25 April 1918
8. NSW Land Registry Services: Book 1175 #678 – General Register of Deeds [Old System Deeds]. *Camden News*, 2, 30 October 1919
9. Reserve Bank of Australia: Series Guide – Government Savings Bank of NSW; Series Guide – Savings Bank of NSW. *Camden News*, 27 January 1921; 28 July 1921
10. Reserve Bank of Australia archives: Government Savings Bank of NSW – Sydney [Head Office] – Chief Accountants Department – Bank Premises Ledgers – Branches A-K [Indexed, Loose-Leaf System] – 1919-1932, p. 253
11. *The Armidale Chronicle*, 2 February 1924. *Camden News*, 12 February 1925
12. NSW Land Registry Services: Book 1331 #162 – General Register of Deeds [Old System Deeds]
13. Camden Museum Archives: 1930s photographs of the building. *Camden News*, 4 June 1925; 23 July 1925; 14 January 1926.
14. *Camden News*, 19 April 1928; 4 March 1929
15. Reserve Bank of Australia: Series Guide – Government Savings Bank of NSW; Series Guide – Savings Bank of NSW. *Camden News*, 23 April 1931; 3 October 1931; 10, 17 December 1931
16. *Camden News*, 27 May 1937; 17 September 1953; 15 October 1953

# Always was, always will be, wasn't easy

**Zoe McPherson**

Camden has a history of conflict, peace-making, loss, and growth. Since the settlers first came to the area in 1795, the Camden district has witnessed peaceful and violent relations between the European settlers and the local Gundungurra, Dharawal, and Dharug tribes<sup>1</sup>. In the 1700s and 1800s, this relationship underwent a turbulent beginning, having gone from peaceful interactions to the emergence of a war. Crossing over into the 20th century, local Indigenous Australians continued to experience damaging impacts from conflicts over racism, land, and sovereignty, including ignorance, violence, and consistent attempts at elimination. Records falsely stating the death of the last local Indigenous Australian in the Camden district<sup>2</sup> was just one of the many cruelties that demonstrated the attempted removal of the Indigenous Australian peoples. However, while struggle and tension still exist between Camden's settler society and the local Indigenous communities, the latter half of the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries demonstrated more impactful forms of activism, recognition, and inclusion of Indigenous culture in Camden.

It is essential to recognise that we only have a fragmented view of the past due to the lack of complete historical records and experiences demonstrating the Indigenous-European relationship. This includes an extensive absence of crucial Indigenous Australian perspectives. However, we can still piece fragments of knowledge together to gain valuable insights into this historical relationship.

## **The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

Long before the arrival of the European Settlers, the Dharug, Gundungurra, and Dharawal tribes inhabited the Camden district formerly known as the Cowpastures. When the Europeans first came to the area, the Dharug tribe inhabited the Northeast of the Nepean River, the Gundungurra tribe lived in the western Cowpastures, and the Dharawal tribe occupied the eastern Cowpastures<sup>3</sup>. As the Europeans became acquainted with the Indigenous peoples, peace was established<sup>4</sup> and a sense of admiration was formed towards the Indigenous tribes<sup>5</sup>. While the Indigenous peoples reciprocated these peaceful connotations, these views were also paired with confusion as they were introduced to foreign people, animals, and technologies. This encounter was depicted in the famous Dharawal 'Bull Cave,' which displayed an Aboriginal drawing of the new bulls and cows in the area<sup>6</sup>. While it was an incredibly insightful artwork that showcased the curiosity and confusion experienced by Indigenous peoples at this time, it was unfortunately destroyed.

In the 19th century, tensions rose between the European settlers and the In-

digenous communities. With the arrival of John Macarthur in 1805 and the growth of his wool production, many sacred elements of Indigenous Australian traditions and customs were forcibly and harmfully interrupted, including hunting and gathering processes and access to land<sup>7</sup>. In 1812, Governor Lachlan Macquarie started allocating land to farmers in the Cowpastures, giving away increased amounts of Indigenous land and, while doing so, decreasing their ability to fulfill the entirety of their traditional livelihoods<sup>8</sup>. The damage inflicted upon the Indigenous peoples worsened when the settlers turned to violence, as seen when Macquarie ordered the military upon the Gundungurra tribe and commanded them to hang innocent or bothersome Indigenous peoples in trees with the hopes of provoking fear in the rest of the tribe.<sup>9</sup>

In 1816, a drought pushed the Gundungurra tribe away from the mountains in a fight for survival, leaving them dependent on the settlers for necessities<sup>10</sup>. However, they found themselves in a violent dispute, leaving more than 40 European farmers dead<sup>11</sup>. As a result, Macquarie sent 3 detachments in the 46th Regiment on an expedition that involved the killings and incarcerations of the Indigenous Australians involved<sup>12</sup>. After a continued search for Indigenous Australians to harm, the settlers discovered a group on Dharawal land at Broughton's Farm in Appin on the 16th of April in what is infamously known as the Appin Massacre. That night, the settlers killed 14 Gundungurra and Dharawal men, women, and children and imprisoned 5<sup>13</sup>. After the Appin massacre, the Indigenous tribes found themselves under the protection of the Macarthur's, James Meehan in 1818, and other European settlers in the decades to follow.<sup>14</sup>

The remainder of the 19th century saw the continuing settler development of the area. As the settlements grew, the tension between the Europeans and the Indigenous tribes remained. The 1820s saw the local Indigenous Australians experience an influenza epidemic, the further loss of life and land<sup>15</sup>, and their forced displacement onto other lands<sup>16</sup>. Gundungurra man William Russell described his childhood in the 1830s-40s as one filled with rapid changes and land sales as he watched the growth of the settler society<sup>17</sup>. One of the most significant transformations in the area was the establishment of the Camden township by John Macarthur's sons, James and William, in 1840 on Camden Park. These changes increased over time as the population grew following the influx of the Gold Fields in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, other legal acts continued to impact the Indigenous communities, including the 1861 NSW Crown Land Acts that further displaced Indigenous Australians and the implementation of the Stolen Generations, which had begun around this time<sup>18</sup>. Despite the continuity of prominent legal acts and discrimination that negatively impacted the local Indigenous tribes in the Camden district to terrible extents, elements of celebration also existed at this time as many residents recorded local languages to ensure the preservation of In-

digenous heritage in Camden.<sup>19</sup>

## The 20th Century

During the 20th century, the relationship between the Indigenous community and the settler society in the Camden township and district remained challenging. However, this century also witnessed a progressive path to Indigenous recognition, rights, and equality. At the beginning of the 1900s, the settler town continued to advance in modernism, the growth of agriculture and industrialization, and Camden's establishment of dairy companies<sup>20</sup>. The Hume Highway also contributed to consumerism in the Camden township<sup>21</sup>. These new developments ensured the continued neglect of the Indigenous tribes, as seen by the creation of inaccurate records that insisted upon the end of the tribes' existence<sup>22</sup> and the limited knowledge of the local Indigenous tribes at this time. However, some settlers were kind enough to take care of and employ Indigenous individuals. Indigenous peoples from Gundungurra and Dharawal tribes still had to search for resources and peace throughout the district, finding work in the Burragorang, Wollondilly, and Nattai River valleys.<sup>23</sup>

In the middle of the 20th century, the agriculture and mining industries helped expand the district and population<sup>24</sup>. However, while life seemed to be going increasingly well for the settler society, the Indigenous locals were facing the same problems that the rest of the First Nations were facing across the country at this time. The Indigenous tribes were not allowed to be considered citizens without a licence until 1944<sup>25</sup>. Additionally, the settler society was still removing Indigenous children from their families, and assimilation policies continued to force them to leave their traditional lifestyle and identity and replace it with a European one<sup>26</sup>. These events continued a relationship of discrimination and racism between the two clashing peoples.

While there was still vast amounts of tension and hostility in the relationship between the Indigenous tribes and the settler society and the path to equality, the latter decades of this century saw a significant turnaround in recognition and celebration. A mural was created from recovered sandstone blocks from St Paulina's Church in 1962<sup>27</sup>. This mural erected by the Camden Rotary Club depicted a traditional Aboriginal hunting scene amongst other representations of the settler society<sup>28</sup>. In the 1980s and 1990s, the settler town established other forms of equality and inclusivity. These formations have included creating authoritative teams, such as the Gundungurra Land Council in 1985<sup>29</sup>. This land council provides cultural, physical, residential, employment, and land services, helps to empower local Indigenous people, and actively attends to the needs of the tribes and their land.<sup>30</sup>

As the celebratory and inclusive events continued between the Indigenous

community and the settler society in Camden, the late 1900s oversaw ‘The Eel Dreamers project,’ a performance run by the Gundungurra Land Council and the Liverpool College of TAFE Aboriginal Unit at the Bents Basin in 1988<sup>31</sup>. The recognition of the local Indigenous tribes and their lands in Camden continued into the 1990s in events such as a Native Title claim on ancestral lands by the Gundungurra Tribal Council Aboriginal Corporation in 1995<sup>32</sup>. Such events and actions demonstrate just how far the relationship between the settler society and the Indigenous people in Camden has come since the first arrival of the settlers in the 1700s.

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The local Indigenous community and settler Camden in the 21st century has been an advancing one full of diversity and commemoration. As the Camden Council has made efforts to work alongside the local Aboriginal councils, they have committed to forming strong ties between the two cultures<sup>33</sup>. Such bonds have been demonstrated in many ways amongst the council and the public, including prioritizing Indigenous well-being<sup>34</sup>, recognizing past events such as memorials for the Appin Massacre<sup>35</sup>, and exhibitions of Indigenous culture that discuss contemporary issues<sup>36</sup>. Following the violence, disease, dispossession, and loss of life<sup>37</sup>, Camden's history recognises the growth from hostility and violence to peace and collaboration. The continuation of positive events, discussions, and understandings will result in a healthier and more enlightening relationship between the local Indigenous community and settler Camden in the future.

I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners of the ancestral lands upon which Camden was established. I would also like to pay my respects to the elders, past, present, and emerging of the Dharawal, Gundungurra, and Dharug countries.

Zoe McPherson is a CHS public history intern from Macquarie University.

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[1] Wrigley, 2016

[2] Davis, 2016, p. 47

[3] Wrigley, 2016

[4] Ibid

[5] Ibid

[6] Camden High School, n.d.

[7] Ibid

[8] Wrigley, 2016

[9] Al-Natour, 2017

[10] Tobin, Hurst, 2019, p. 97

[11] Camden High School, n.d.

- [12] Wrigley, 2016
- [13] Camden High School, n.d.
- [14] Ibid
- [15] Ibid
- [16] Davis, 2016, p. 47
- [17] Russell et al., 1914, p. 103
- [18] Davis, 2016, p. 106
- [19] Figar, 2023, p. 255
- [20] Willis, 2016
- [21] Willis, 2023
- [22] Davis, 2016, p. 47
- [23] Read, 2023
- [24] Willis, 2023
- [25] Dodds, 2017, p. 164
- [26] Ibid, p. 163
- [27] Davis, 2016, p. 61
- [28] Monuments Australia et al., 2023
- [29] Read, 2023
- [30] Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council, n.d.
- [31] Reads, 2023
- [32] Ibid
- [33] Camden Council, n.d.
- [34] Le Blanc, 2023
- [35] Willis, 2023
- [36] Dodds, 2017, p. 159
- [37] Figar, 2023. p. 255

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# The Elizabethan Way: A Life Immersed in Agency, Innovation & Community

**Paula Muir**

Prior to her untimely death in Surrey, England in August 1911, Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow, had been in the midst of editing the family archives, which would become, ‘Some early records of the Macarthur’s of Camden.’[\[1\]](#) In her final days, when she knew she would never return to her beloved Camden Park, the knowledge that she had shaped its evolution, may have assuaged her longing. Shrewdly, Elizabeth, left the final editing of this seminal volume to her daughter, Sibella,[\[2\]](#) as she knew in her hands, it would achieve the attention to detail it required. Before her death, Elizabeth had written the book’s dedication, ‘to the cherished memory of my dear parents James and Emily Macarthur... whose lives were devoted to the highest interests of Australia.’[\[3\]](#) In 1914 the volume was published and the long held desire of Elizabeth and her father, to have such an account in print, had been fulfilled.



**Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow, Camden Park, c. 1858, (State Library of NSW)**

This final posthumous accomplishment of Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow was testament to the driven manner in which she lived her life. She was a woman of vision and agency; not for mere self-interest but for the purpose of improving the lives of the community which surrounded Camden Park. During her lifetime she took on and excelled in a variety of diverse roles: property owner, businesswoman, patron, community leader, traveller and matriarch. This paper seeks to explore her rich thirst for knowledge, innovation and subsequent practice and her capacity to be the giver of opportunity to those who entered her orbit.

Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow was a possessor of curiosity. Complementing

this trait was a sturdy sense of self and the importance of family and the community she belonged to. As her life unfolded, she would seek out ways to improve the output of Camden Park Estate and its surrounds, which was situated on the traditional land of the Dharawal people.[4] As the granddaughter of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, her blood was infused with adventure and productivity. As Camden gentry, the Macarthur's 'economic power and social authority in the district was to prove amazingly resilient for the next hundred years.' [5] The lives of her grandparents was also grounded in struggle as they faced the diverse challenges that came with the infant crawl of a new colony. Internal and external conflict, legal strife,[6] and health issues had shaped their lives and their children's. Elizabeth's mother, Emily, had arrived in Australia from Britain in 1839, and like her mother-in-law, brought considerable energy and enterprise to her position at Camden Park. In addition to championing wool and dairy industries, she was also a fine artist, producing numerous watercolours.[7]

The crowning glory of the Camden Park Estate would be the glorious mansion, which was completed in 1835. James and his brother William became the first owners of the Georgian home; it was built of sandstock brick, stucco-covered and scored to appear like stone.[8]

It's first recorded birth would be that of Elizabeth Macarthur on the 8th May 1840. Elizabeth was the product of a union that was grounded in the spirit of intellect, adventure, creativity, education and beneficial social standing. Emily Stone was a schoolteacher; clever,

artistic and adventurous, a clear match for James.[9] In March 1839 they arrived as a married couple at Camden Park and Emily was soon industrious on various Macarthur endeavours, 'including the wine and dairying concerns which her dowry had funded and which brought profit and prestige to the state.' [10] Significantly, she applied her knowledge and teaching skills to the school- founded by William- situated on the grounds of Camden Park.



**Elizabeth Macarthur, Watercolour Portrait by Emily Macarthur, from 1845, (National Library of Australia)**



**Camden Park House, Watercolour by Conrad Martens, 1843, (State Library of NSW)**

Elizabeth's formal education therefore began at home. Being taught by her mother must have been an empowering experience for a young Elizabeth; after being named after her formidable grandmother, she was exposed to an environment which nurtured female intellect and creativity. Though female rights were still in their infancy, that she was given the opportunity to witness her mother and grandmother excelling in male dominated fields was decisive in growing into her own identity. Finding her own voice would be the foundation for her developing her business acumen which would guide her shrewd decision making in the years ahead.

Elizabeth, as an only child, was also given the chance to explore her creativity in sketch and watercolour. Possessing some of her mother's exquisite skill, her creativity was enhanced first, through Emily's tutelage. In her teenage years she studied with



**Elizabeth and her beloved mother Emily, 1858, (State Library of New South Wales)**

renowned artist, Conrad Martens.[11]

When Elizabeth turned twenty, Emily deemed it desirable that the family should tour Britain and Europe and expose Elizabeth to a greater education as well as the elements of high society.[12]

From 1860 to 1864, Elizabeth was exposed to different cultures and creativities. During this grand tour she also her undertook training at the Normal Central School of Art, South Kensington Museum in London, where she received private tuition from William Collingwood Smith.[13]

Elizabeth's craft in her early twenties had progressed from 'crude youthful attacks on paper to fine and sensitive water-colour landscapes,' [14] and although she did not reach the heights of her mother's work, she demonstrated a deft and expressive brush.



**Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow to the right, with daughter Emily and son James, (De Vries, Strength of Spirit, 1995)**

It is intriguing to ponder what Elizabeth would have made of the society she found herself in during her extensive stay in Britain. Did this life appeal to her or did she long for home, the landscapes, the people, the rustic openness? After four years exploring a different way of life, the family returned home.

Elizabeth married Captain Arthur Onslow in early 1867; although he was from a blue-blooded English family, he did not receive a private income from the navy.[15] De Vries asserts that the marriage was a happy one.[16] and although wrenched by the loss of two young children, their remaining six progeny were nurtured in a vibrant and privileged environment. Elizabeth's father died shortly after her marriage and her mother, Emily, continued to live at the mansion, a constant source of love and support for her daughter. Running the large estate brought challenges to the Onslow's and combined with raising a large brood, they were kept busy by their surrounds and all that it produced.

In 1882, Arthur died unexpectedly at forty-eight of a stroke.[17] This came

just two years after the death of Elizabeth's mother. The immeasurable grief and loss both deaths caused Elizabeth must have been overwhelming. However, with characteristic Macarthur resolve, she emerged from her grief, envisaging a future which would both challenge her and induce fruitful innovation.

Having learnt first hand from her mother, the importance of education, Elizabeth in 1887 travelled to England with her six children. [18] For the following four years, they remained, all children receiving first-class educations and discovering Britain and Europe.

During this time Elizabeth

explored the continent through a mature lens, one which was preoccupied with warding off the issues that arose due to the financial crashes between 1885-95 [19] and capitalising on the potential growth of her estate. As a property owner and businesswoman, she intuited, like her father had previously, that in studying the dairying methods that had developed in both Britain and France, she could apply such innovatory measures at home. Elizabeth was a quick study; combined with a calculated daring and decisiveness, in the years after she returned home, Camden Park, would flourish.

As detailed by Heritage consultant, Chris Betteridge, Elizabeth installed twelve cooperative dairies and a central creamery on the estate.[20] The operating force behind this procedure was called, metayage: in short, it meant share-farming. Up to a dozen dairy families were housed on the grounds of the Camden Park estate and provided with farming equipment.[21] Although Elizabeth owned the dairy cows, herds were allocated to each family. This innovatory approach was quickly successful and would be profitable for all involved. Elizabeth also installed a piggery as a productive method of using surplus milk.[22] Astutely, by the turn of the new century, she had decided to consolidate the enterprise into a company, her six children named as shareholders.[23] Nearly a decade before, she had also acted with intuition, applying for and being granted the right for her and her children to use Macarthur-



**Capt. Arthur Onslow (State Library of NSW)**

Onslow as their surname. [24]

Although her bold business decisions depict a shrewd mind at work, Elizabeth also possessed a genuine desire of giving back to the community she belonged to. With regards to her employees, she was known to drive around the various worker cottages, conversing with the families and then ‘devising ways of giving them better homes and brighter lives.’[25] With the greater community, she was a constant and reassuring presence, ‘it is difficult to explain today just how important Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow was in the Camden district in the 1880s-1900s and how widely admired and loved she was.’[26]

Elizabeth’s understanding of the benefits of education, and its capacity to positively impact the welfare of students was demonstrated through her interest and support in the public schools of the district. Similarly, her financial support to the School of Arts [27] was a reflection of not only her own love for creation but that it should exist as an avenue for future generations to partake in. Her patronage also enabled the creation of the heralded Macarthur Park after she donated sixty-seven acres for its construction in 1905. Two years after her death, in 1913, the community of Camden assembled in the Park at the unveiling of a beautiful memorial to Elizabeth, a testament to a community woman whose charity, the mayor described, ‘knew no bounds.’[28] These proactive and practical community contributions were a deep reflection of her desire to give back to the community that, in turn, held her in the warmest of embraces.

Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow died on August 2nd, 1911, in Send, England, after consecutive strokes. She is buried there, in the Onslow family church plot. Her spirit however, one envisages, sweeps languidly through her home at Camden Park, gliding with familiar ease around her cherished estate. Then on and into the Camden community, surveying the fruits of her vision and industry. She lives on through her legacy: a woman of agency, achievement and generosity.

Paula Muir is a CHS public history intern from Macquarie University.

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# **The Global Fight: The parallels and influences between Allied Recruitment Drives and Camden during World War 1**

**Jacques Michael**

Recruitment became a central and increasingly important feature of the Allied campaign during World War 1, especially as the initial excitement in 1914 that corresponded with high amounts of enlistment waned after the war ground to a stalemate and costly campaigns such as Gallipoli and the formation of the Western Front started to take a toll. A renewed focus and importance of specific strategies and methods that were part of recruitment and army public relations was key in maintaining the necessary enlistment numbers to address this.

Being part of this allied campaign, Camden utilised the community engagement methods used by the allies globally in their community enlistment drive. This largely consisted of establishing contact, local involvement and communication between the military and local communities.[1]

This will become the focal point of this essay, linking how the types of community engagement evident globally were also apparent within the Camden recruitment drive. This will be broken down into three major sections. The similarity between parades and marches in Allied nations to the Kangaroo recruitment march in 1915. How local associations and committees were used to coordinate recruitment efforts. The essay will then expand the scope of the traditional view of war recruitment, looking at using the Red Cross to recruit nurses into the war effort.

## **Kangaroo March**

Marches and parades were a very public method designed around engaging the community and spreading military public relations. Academic Carroll Pennell summarised this when examining how the centrally run, Parliamentary Recruiting Committee established in the UK in 1914, used parades as part of their public recruiting strategy. This consisted of marches attended by local crowds carrying banners including 'Your existence is at stake' and 'Your Country needs you'. [2] This reveals two central methods that were evident both internationally and within Camden, military marches and pa-

rades engaged the public and were used to communicate military emblems and slogans that encouraged enlistment.

This was utilised in the Australian Army recruitment drive through the Kangaroo March, the longest recruitment march in Australia, between Wagga Wagga and Sydney.[3] This came in 1916, after the Gallipoli campaign and was intended to support subsequent offences the Australian army would be a part of on the Western Front, in particular the Battle of Fromelles.[4] The initial march was communicated as per a memorandum to the NSW premier which outlined the route and named “those participating in the march ... as the Kangaroos”.[5] A *Camden News* article elaborated on the plans, describing how on arriving from Gundagai, soldiers will be “entertained at a public dinner”.[6] From these initial plans, the themes of both public engagement through marching in local towns, and the use of emblems through the title of the ‘Kangaroos’ were already evident.

Certain decisions and events around the Kangaroo March concerning Camden further corresponded with community engagement and the use of army communication in allied countries. The decision to divert through Camden was made on the march, with a planned “115 men and several horses (that) should march through Camden”.[7] Extending on the community element, the organisers decided that “no recruits will be enlisted after Campbelltown” to “preserve the identity of the Kangaroos as an entirely country body”.[8] Corresponding with the usage of emblems to build an identity within the allied nations, the decision to maintain a rural nature of the battalion intended to do this, build a rural identity around the Kangaroo battalions that was meant to encourage people in rural NSW to enlist through identifying with the battalion and to attract the local community to support the enlistment drive through identifying with them. From this strengthened identity, a clear increase in community support occurred with “the appearance and conduct of the recruits were favourably commented upon (by the Camden community), and a large crowd cheered them as they marched away”.[9] It was clear as such, that like the intended strategies globally, the army engaged with the local Camden community and used this engagement to communicate messaging promoting enlistment.

The Kangaroo march emblem in Figure 1 paraded throughout Camden during the march further extends how the march communicated army public rela-

tions. Two key elements did this, the inclusion of the Union Jack, the Crown and the messaging “For King and Country”, and the inclusion of the Australian flag and the rural image of the Kangaroo. Both related to the imperial rhetoric around the war by highlighting a duty to Britain and its monarchy, as well as their community and national duty to Australia and Camden. The Camden community support and the emblems that were part of the march further correspond to the military parades and banners in Britain and other allied nations, further showing how community engagement through parades was a key feature in both Allied and Camden enlistment drives.



**Figure 1: Kangaroo March Banner, Wagga Wagga (1915)**

### **Committee and associations**

Local branches and committees became a key part of the centrally run Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in Britain. These branches were key in engaging local communities by providing enlistment opportunities and spreading military propaganda through local media outlets.[10] This was further extended through engaging local sporting clubs in the community. Canada is an example of this through the local ice hockey leagues being, as per J.J Wilson, ‘proved to be effective instruments of recruitment for the CEF (Canadian expedition forces)’.[11] A second element of community engagement emerges from this, the use of local divisions and sporting associations to enlist and encourage involvement in the recruitment drive.

This was further adapted and replicated within Camden. Local divisions of armed forces recruitment were utilised in driving enlistment within the local community.[12] The Camden War Service committee relates to this, a group that acted “in association with the State War Council” tasked with "recruiting and making provision for returned soldiers".[13] This section was then absorbed into the Camden Recruiting Association which looked to deliver NSW

recruitment policy into the community, helping the state meet its recruitment quotas.[14] The association also acted as a part of the public relations as part of the army, aimed at driving enlistment. In a placement in *Camden News*, the association drove the importance of having “every available man” enlisted and despite the 400 000 people who have enlisted, “800 000 men of military age in Australia who have not enlisted”.[15] Both the Camden War Service Committee and the Camden Recruitment Association acted, as similar groups had in allied nations, as local divisions of central organisations oriented around spreading government communications in local media outlets and providing an avenue for local community members to enlist.

While not directly enlisting people, sporting clubs did provide a way to extend and promote the military within the community. This was shown with Camden District Crickets' engagement in fundraising activity for the Red Cross and engagement with military displays such as the “Narellan Machine Gun” and a “captured Kaiser” during their matches.[16] The local cycling group also engaged in these activities, with contestants at a 1914 meet taking “part in the athletic and military events” for cash prizes.[17] Camden Rifle Club also had strong links to the military, with the defence department making certain donations as they “want the men who cannot go away to serve their country, to learn to defend that country if the occasion should arise”.[18] Although these clubs were not explicitly used to drive recruitment in Camden as sporting clubs had been used in other parts of Australia and allied nations, by engaging in both fundraising, military events and activities, and being also funded by the army to strengthen translatable skills as rifle sports, clubs acted as a way to further normalise and make acceptable the recruitment activity that was part of the recruitment drive in Camden. As such the usage of local branches and sporting clubs that strengthened the recruitment drive was a form of community engagement that was apparent in both Camden and the Allies during the recruitment drive.

### **The Red Cross**

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Red Cross provided ‘an acceptable route’ to women who would support the war effort as ‘battlefield nurses’ across the United Kingdom, North America, and Europe.[19] Similar to soldier recruitment, this was done through local divisions of the central organisation, which looked to initially train in home nursing and first aid and then provide opportunities for women as voluntary aids across both the home and the western

front.[20] The Red Cross was also a public relations vehicle that was oriented around recruiting Red Cross volunteers, as evident in one 1917 advertisement pleading “One Greatest Mother, Join”, having clear parallels to the paternal imagery and rhetoric used to recruit soldiers.[21] Both the training and spreading of recruitment material within local media were evident within the Allied recruitment drive for Red Cross volunteers and nurses and Camden nurses volunteered for battlefield service.

In terms of training, notable citizen Dr R. B. Crookston, Government Medical Officer and later mayor of Camden assisted these opportunities within Camden.[22] He in conjunction with the Camden Red Cross, it was advertised in *Camden News* that “nursing classes to be held by Dr. Crookston” was being conducted.[23] This was a necessary process as another bulletin stated “Home Nursing Class Certificates (necessary qualification needed to be deployed) have been sent from St. Johns Ambulance Association and can be obtained by applying to Dr. Crookston”. [24] As such, similar to the training used by the Red Cross in the UK, the Red Cross in Camden provided training opportunities for Camden women late in the war to nurse soldiers at Red Cross convalescent homes as voluntary aids.

Along with training, the Red Cross used promotional activities driven around enlistment to garner support for fundraising for the war effort. This was shown in the *Camden News* Lady Ferguson Appeal which in 1914 looked to form an “Australian branch of the British Red Cross” oriented around providing medical care across Australia and abroad.[25] This was further evident in a 1918 article describing the “Red Cross Society” providing fundraising for “nursing assistance for sick and wounded Australian soldiers and sailors”. [26] As such, the Camden branch of the Australian branch of the British Red Cross provided training and fundraising support.

## **Conclusion**

Camden's recruitment efforts as such, have been influenced or at least have clear parallels with the recruiting efforts and strategies in Britain and across the allied world. Initially, this was shown through the 1915 Kangaroo march and its parallels with military parades in England during the war. The Camden branches of central recruiting bodies including the Camden Recruitment Association, the War Service Committee and local Camden sporting clubs resonated with global efforts to form local branches and engage local sporting

associations. Nursing recruitment was also done through the Camden Red Cross as had been done by the British Red Cross. World War 1 in Camden indicates the interesting cross-section between global conflicts and local councils. As geo-political tensions and conflict become a more pressing feature in our lives, local council leadership becomes central in how we as communities navigate this environment.

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# **The Mystery of the Missing Segment of Oxley Street, Camden**

**Dianne Smith**

When sharing a cuppa with a friend recently I mentioned that I regretted not taking more notice of my grandmother and my mother's cooking skills. My grandmother made meat pies and sold them as her form of income from the end of the Depression and throughout World War Two, to the local movie-goers at an open-air picture theatre in a country NSW.

My mother fed a family of six. The labour-saving introduction of Deb Instant Mash Potato and Surprise Peas in the early '60s must have captivated young homemakers, my mum included. If you were on a journey to the Moon maybe, however I wouldn't recommend them.

As a young woman of the 1960-70s I was driven to achieve at school and then look towards a career in the future. Gazing into adulthood through my 'full of self-important' rose coloured lens telescope, I anticipated dining on the newly introduced fast food options. Silly me.

On with the story. I asked my cuppa companion, Alan, if he remembered what were his mum's cooking highlights? He responded that she was a good all-round cook. And then casually dropped in that she made own butter.

Well, I was all ears! Alan's parents were died-in-the-wool 'Camdenites'. His mother, Ethel came from the large family of Adams siblings; her parents ran the Werombi Post Office late 1800s early 1900s. While Carl, his dad was a child from the equally large and local Rapley family. They were both from people who lived on the land so naturally they had a cow.

Alan went on to describe his home's location and explain the mystery. We lived at 16 Oxley Street (Camden). Back then there was an extension of what is now, in 2024, Oxley Street. It continued behind Camden Public School all the way down, intersecting with Exeter Street. This was what is now part of the Camden swimming pool area.

On the high side, the block on the corner with Mitchell Street belonged to the Thorn family. Next was our family home. Mum and Dad, Ethel and Carl Rapley had a busy household of five kids, four sons and one daughter. I was the youngest, born after my dad returned from military service in World War Two having experienced the Japanese break out in Cowra. where he was stationed.



The third house in this group was the Channel-Gammage family home. Beside this was a lane-way to John Street. Next came the council depot. It just contained shovels and other tools used to do jobs around town.

Opposite this, on the low side of Oxley Street were the stockyards, then open paddock, next the 'ag plot' for the high school kids at Camden Central School and lastly came the blacksmith, Bill Dodd. His wife Ella was the barmaid in the public bar of the Royal Hotel in Argyle Street.

She was famously known for her response if ever asked for a 'lemon squash' to which the customer would hear, 'If you want a lemon squash, the f'ing milk bar is down the road.'

Johnny and Josie Taylor's family lived in the Dodd house after the Dodd family moved on to a home in Exeter and Elizabeth Street next door to what is now Mitre 10.



**Auntie Katie Adams**  
**(Ethel's sister)**

At the end of Oxley Street on the low side was the Camden Brass Band Hall. Probably a remnant building from World War Two. Harold Pollard was a prominent figure for many years in this band, later becoming its leader. My brother John Rapley played the cornett in the band too. Finally, Ebby Iz-zard's house was on Exeter Street facing up Oxley Street looking towards Argyle Street.

Q: What year was this?

I was born in 1946 in the Sunshine Maternity Hospital in Murray Street and lived and played with great mates from many Oxley Street families up 'til 1957, when we moved to Alpha Road, and I started at Camden High School.

Q: OK, where was this cow kept and who milked it?

Across from these three family homes were the stockyards so it was the ideal place for dad to keep the cow; this is all now the Camden Swimming Pool precinct. It wasn't always the same cow. Dad bought and sold them. He milked the cow morning and night. Mum made the butter from the cream.

Q: Did your mum use a butter churn?

Yes, and often I had to turn its handle. I didn't like this butter.

Q: Why? Could it be because it was salt-free?

Maybe. There was a funny 'family story' about one of dad's cow though.

Q: Do tell...

Well for some unknown reason one of our neighbours wasn't happy about dad having our cow in the Camden Show stockyard. Dad often found the wire of the fence cut and his cow out wandering 'Onslow Park.' One evening he kept watch and confronted someone sporting pliers severing the wires of the fence.

There was an inevitable skirmish which ended in dad with battered hands from contact with the pliers and wire, plus our neighbor with a bleeding nose. The perpetrator of the original transgression decided his damaged pride demanded recompense and so chose to get the law involved. Dad was preparing his defence against the charge when he was discreetly informed it had been dropped.

By 1957 the Department of Education finally came to an agreement with dad on restitution for our property and house in Oxley Street as dad wanted value for money before he would sell. This land was resumed for the development that we see today and Oxley Street became shorter by approximately one third. We moved to our new home in Alpha Road. The cow came too and took up residence in Auntie Kate's back paddock across the road. Happy cow, happy dad. Oh, just remembered, whenever one of my older brothers, John came home to visit, mum made a fantastic caramel tart. I was always so happy to see John.



# 2024 National Trust Australian Heritage Festival 'Connections'

The Camden events for the 2024 Heritage Festival included The Camden Chinese Market Gardeners 1899-1993 book launch in early April and member speakers at the May general meeting on the festival theme Connections. CHS members who spoke at the general meeting held on 8 May 2024 at the Camden Museum were Joy Riley, Frances Warner and Carol Carmagnola (Dee).

## Joy Riley, a life

Joy Riley

### Genealogy

*Generation 1:* Jesse Dunk, a man of valour and adventure, was born in 1787 and laid to rest at St John's Camden in 1860. His life was a tapestry of service, as he fought in the English army in Spain, Portugal, Canada, and France under the esteemed Duke of Wellington against Napoleon's armies.

On 12 June 1839, he boarded the ship 'Florist', as a bounty immigrant free man, with his second wife, Charlotte, and seven children: John, William, Jesse, Sarah, Martha, Thomas, and Elizabeth.

*Generation 2:* William Dunk married Eliza Barker and had four children

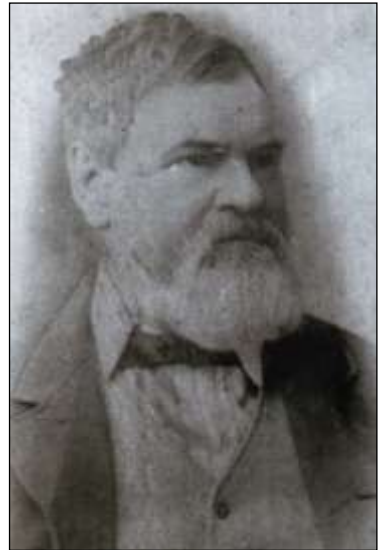
*Generation 3:* Their son William Henry Dunk married Jemima Small.

*Generation 4:* Their son Jack Northcote Dunk married Laura May Rix.

And their daughter Lorna Joy Dunk married Bruce Anthony Riley.

### My Story

My father, Jack Dunk, was a mechanic in 1920 at a garage at 120 Argyle Street opposite the Post Office with his brother Cliff. In the 1930s, they had a garage in Picton. Dad enlisted in WW2. Mum had to sell the garage as she could not afford staff or parts. Dad served in the Middle East in the 9<sup>th</sup> Division as one of the Rats of Tobruk. He came home in November 1942 and



**Jessie Dunk b1787 d1860  
(Joy Riley)**



### **Garage, 120 Argyle St Camden 1920s (Joy Riley)**

was discharged with hypertension.

When Dad was president of the Camden RSL Sub-Branch, they acquired the 'mess hall' from the Narellan Army Camp at Green's Corner and moved it to Oxley Street. The Civic Centre is there now.

Dad had many jobs: carting wheat at Grenfell, managing the market garden at the bottom of Chellaston Street in Camden, acting as an agent for rotary hoes and tractors, and ploughing the Chinese market gardens at Miss Davies along Macquarie Grove Road.

In 1949, he purchased a fruit and vegetable, milk bar, and mixed business at 152 Argyle Street, next to Furner Bros. My mother, sister Doreen and I all worked here. The shop was open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., which were very long days.

Dad went to the Sydney markets two days a week. He left home at 4:00 a.m. Some days, he would bring home some of the men from the Chinese gardens with their large bags of rice.

We had a fruit run to Cobbitty and Spring Creek once a week. On Saturday mornings, I would go with Dad to Spring Creek and be home in time to go to the pictures. I would go to the matinee. I would meet Dawn Howlett from the



**JM Dunk Fruit Shop & Milk Bar 152 Argyle Street, Camden 1949-1960  
(Joy Riley)**

hamburger shop across the road. We were 12 years old and are still the best of friends.

Because we didn't close until 10:00 p.m., there would always be someone coming in from 5 to 10. We were lucky we lived on John Street, not far from home. We had very good customers. One was Miss Faithfull Anderson from Camelot. Dad would make a Christmas box of fruit every Christmas and deliver it to all her workers. She gave us a gift when she went to England for Queen Elizabeth's coronation. I got a string of pearls.

We had a lot of passing trade as the main road (Hume Highway) was still going through Camden. Visitors were going to the rotolactor. We had a good name for our milkshakes. Later, we only opened 5½ days a week: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, and Saturday, 9:00 am to 1:30 pm. The shop is now Camden Valley Meats. The shop was sold in 1960 due to Dad's ill health. He passed away in August 1962, aged 54.

My grandfather Albert Rix's first cousin was Sir William McKell, the Governor General. He would call in on his way to Yarralumla in Canberra, which



**Cottage, 66 John Street, Camden. (Joy Riley)**

he called Frogs Hollow.

### **Growing up in Camden at 66 John Street.**

I was born in 1938 at Welbourne Nursing Hospital in Oxley Street, Camden, where the council park is now. I lived in the family home until 1977. Nurse Taplin owned the Welbourne Nursing Hospital.

I went to Camden Public School from 1942-1952. My kindergarten teacher was Miss Frazer, who later married and became Mrs Hider. Her husband was a pilot stationed at the Camden Airfield. One day, he flew over the schoolyard and dipped his wings of the plane. He was killed at war and never returned. Everyone loved Mrs Hider.

There was another teacher in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class. None of the girls liked her, but the boys loved her. She was Scottish, and I couldn't understand her. I blame her because I can't spell. Mrs. Kerrigan was the sewing teacher. I was expelled from sewing for laughing and had to spend the lesson on the verandah. I still can't sew. My best friend is a safety pin.

My 6<sup>th</sup> class teacher was Mr Bowen. Everyone loved him. I repeated 6<sup>th</sup> class.



**Staff Photo. Rodney's Grocery Store, 180-186 Argyle Street, (former Haffenden and Henderson building) opposite the Crown Hotel. Steve Cushing (Manager), Rhonda Chipperfield, Barbara Toovey, Joy Dunk (later Riley), Patricia Green, Wayne Taylor. (Camden Images)**

I left school in December of my 2nd year, six weeks before my 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mr Baker said I had to come back for one day, my birthday on the 1<sup>st</sup> February. I didn't.

In 1960, after the fruit shop was sold, I went to work at Rodney's Grocery shop owned by Coles, situated in the Haffendens building opposite the Crown Hotel. I worked there for six years. After two months on holiday in New Zealand, I returned home to work at Coles New World supermarket. In 1966, Liverpool was Coles' second supermarket in NSW. I was the head girl. From there, I went to Bankstown, store openings, and head office supervision. In all, I worked for 17½ years for Coles.

Then, I married my husband, Bruce Riley, who passed away in 1990. I gave up work in 1977. I worked in our fruit shop and then at Coles since I was 11 years old. I thought it was time for a break.

My sister Doreen married Col Shepard, the barber. They had a shop in Argyle Street, now the handbag store. Doreen had a jewellery and gift shop at

the front, and I worked there one day a week.

Today, I am involved in Cawdor Over 55s, Harrington Park Over 55s, family history, and the historical society, The Oaks Historical Society, and lots of lunches with friends. As you can imagine, I have lots of relatives—Dunk, Small, Rix, Murdoch. At 86, my memory is still good, so I have lots of information for the museum and family history.



**Jack N Dunk NX32715 (Joy Riley)**



**Joy Riley 2024 (Joy Riley)**

## **Leone Flay, a life**

Leone Flay

From the moment she could hold a book, Leone's heart was captivated by the world of literature. Her passion for books led her to a job at the school library during her formative years. She attended high school from 1961 to 1965, and the Leaving Certificate after five years of school.

Leone wanted to become a teacher but did not get the marks and was not prepared to repeat the Fifth Form. She got First Class Honors in Biology so thought she might become a laboratory technician.

She tried a few jobs in libraries and finally got a job at ACI (Australian Consolidated Industries) Technical Library, which is attached to an industry. ACI manufactured glass at the factory in Waterloo, Sydney. She was there for five years.

Leone got married in 1971 and moved to Campbelltown, where she spent a few weeks here and there at different libraries and at a solicitor's office in Camden.

She started at Campbelltown Library when it was a joint Campbelltown-Camden Library Service. Camden separated in the mid-1970s and stayed with Camden Library. Library staff included Chris Shipton, Colleen Haines, Amanda Smithers, Janice Cruikshank and Lorraine Riley. Her family grew, and her son Richard was born in 1976.

Leone did a smattering of jobs at the Camden Library and started cataloguing books in the mid-1970s, when the librarian would bring boxes of books for me to catalogue at home. Leone said, 'Libraries have gone through lots of changes over these years. Initially we had to type up catalogue cards and a card for each subject on cardboard cards.'

She said, 'I am not sure if anyone remembers the old card catalogues where there were several cards for each book subject. A/T, subjects, up to three to four subject cards. These had to be typed by hand and included all the publishing details, number of pages, illustrations, and subjects so that if a book was being withdrawn, each card belonging to that book had to be removed from the catalogue.'

'The digital era has changed librarianship. Nowadays, all books, DVDs, CDs, magazines, and articles are entered into an electronic database, which is simpler both when entering and withdrawing. The system automatically deletes details.'



**Leone Flay giving her talk at the Camden Historical Society on 8 May 2024 for Heritage Festival. (I Willis)**

Leone recalls, ‘Librarianship has changed a lot over the 50 years since I started. A lot of people use the library for research, so much of what I have is to help people to find what they want for their school assignments. This an interesting part of the job because I learnt a great deal about a broad range of topics.’

‘During the last 20 years of my time at Camden Library, I became the Collection Management Librarian for the ANF collection. This means I was responsible for buying the ANF collection and had to develop a profile for the ANF collection.’

‘During 2017, I reached the height of my career when I managed the Camden Library where I managed the library while the librarian was on maternity leave for 12 months.’

‘This was very rewarding because all my years of experience were used well. It allowed me to impart some of my knowledge to monitor young staff.’

During this time, I was able to fulfil some of my goals as a mentor through training in the workplace.’

## **Warner Family Connections to Carrington Village**

Frances Warner

A dedicated nurse, Frances Warner served at Carrington Hospital from 1969 to 1970. During this time, it was a convalescent hospital, and Frances played a crucial role in caring for the homeless from Sydney. Her compassion and dedication were evident in her regular interactions with these individuals.

Frances recalled that a bus arrived from Sydney every Friday with homeless men and women who needed medical attention. The hospital gave them fresh air, clean accommodation, healthy food, and a good dose of TLC. Matron Hunter-Smith welcomed the new arrivals and interviewed each one. They were allocated rooms – single rooms upstairs, ward style downstairs. Some men preferred to sleep on the verandah, where they were happier. There were canvas blinds to keep out the weather.

The nursing staff would take the patients to their accommodation and give them a general view of the dining room, bathrooms, medication dispensary, games room with a pool table and the outdoor smoking area. No smoking was allowed in the building.

Some patients were ‘frequent flyers’ according to Frances. Frances recalled, ‘I resigned in 1970, expecting my first child, Bradley, in December 1970’. Frances made a ‘special female friend’ whose name she has forgotten. Frances says, ‘She left a gift for me at Fosseys Store in Camden – a complete bassinet, stand, basket and linen with blue trim’.

### **Other connections**

Bradley did a one-week placement in Year 10 for work experience when he was in high school. He had planned to be a chef but chose nursing at Carrington and Camden Hospital. He was the first male student to be selected for a nursing position.

Penny-Anne did two weeks of work experience as an outdoor staff member at Carrington. She helped lay a brick path leading to the Masonic House. When visiting as a Brownie Guide, she planted Flanders Poppies in the garden near the Masonic House. She was the first person to hold an outdoor position.

My Harry's mother, Ethel, and his father, Harry Senior, had been living with Harry and Frances in the North Wing at Camden Park House. Ethel died at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Picton. Harry Senior decided he wanted to go into care as there were too many memories at Camden Park.

Harry Senior went to Carrington, and he was quite happy. There were open spaces, and it was still country. Activities included outings and painting in the painting studio in the Old Parry Ward, which was conducted by an outside teacher. Many of Harry Senior's paintings were used as raffle prizes.



**Frances Warner giving her talk on the Warner Family at the CHS meeting on 8 May 2024 (I Willis)**

My Harry helped run the 1<sup>st</sup> Camden South Cubs and Scouts. Frances was a Girl Guide leader. My Harry has been a resident of Paling Court Thirlmere Unit for medical reasons. He enjoys bus trips, coffee and cake at Rock Salt Cafe, bingo, art, and exercise activities. There is church on Sunday and Wednesday, as well as my afternoon visits.

Residents at Carrington are entertained at New Paling Court, Werombi House, and Mary McKillop House. Campfire songs, Christmas singing, and the giving of home-made gifts are among the activities and displays at the annual fete. Then Covid-19 turned up in November 2019.

Frances moved into independent living at Carrington in February 2020, leaving Camden Park after 54 years. She purchased a small house overlooking the lake and golf course. There is lots of wildlife, including deer, foxes, goats, and kangaroos, and the birds include swans, pelicans, ducks, and water hens.

Frances is involved in crafts, cards, bingo, coffee mornings and pen pals with Spring Farm school students. She also does pastoral care visits at Carrington. My Harry and Frances are happy with their Carrington Connections, making new and meeting old friends.

## **Nursing at Camden Hospital 1964-1968**

Carol Carmagnola (Dee)

I had previously nursed at Taree near Bulahdelah, my hometown, and at Beverly Park, a home for muscular dystrophy boys at Campbelltown. Feeling uncomfortable there, I had an interview with Matron Harley at Camden Hospital. How small it looked with a winding staircase leading up to the Matron's office, a route I would negotiate a few times over my career.

Matron suggested I start my training as a nurse, and I was soon outfitted with uniforms and was allocated a room in the nearby new nurses' home across the road from the hospital. Our uniforms were narrow blue and white stripes with a wraparound starched apron with a bib attached and a wide starched waistband, topped with a white starched cap with stripes to denote years of service. We could purchase a blue nurse's cape with Camden Hospital insignia to wear to and from shifts.

The nurse's home gave me a place to live with a nice room and shared kitchen and bathrooms. The matron had a flat at one end of the nurse's home. There was an 11 p.m. curfew; if we were later, we had to be admitted to the nurse's home by night duty sister Kirby. We had two late passes a month. My fellow nurses came from far and wide and were all from different backgrounds; a few I kept in contact with.

Soon after moving to Camden, I met my future husband Bruno when he partnered with me at a debut ball, and my future in Camden was cemented. Even though nursing was not my ideal career, I knew my options were limited. I would like to name some inspiring nursing sisters like Sister Camilla Kirby and Sister Jean Cameron, and others who were so caring and kind to me. Options gave me little choice, and I think I did become a competent, caring nurse.

Nurses could have meals provided in the hospital dining room even on days off, but no casual attire such as slacks or jeans was allowed—even a fashionable grey pantsuit I turned up in! When nurses had meals while on duty, we had to stand if a senior nurse or staff member entered the dining room. Often, we'd be up and down numerous times during our meals.

Shifts were 6am until 2pm or 2pm until 10pm. Every six weeks, we had to do the night shift from 10pm until 6am. I recall doing the night shift for six-week stints; I missed the daylight. Our responsibilities increased as we moved up the ranks into the second year, third and fourth year. Moving from bed bathing patients and pan room duties, we gradually progressed to surgical dressings, injections and medications, among other nursing tasks. A reg-



**Camden District Hospital Nurses Graduation 1968. Back Row (L-R) Sr Carol Dee (md name Carmagnola), Sr Glenys Lumly, Matron Harley, Sr Merrilyn Fenn (later Hearn), Sr Lyn Longhurst (later Dunbar), and a friend. Front Row (L-R) Sr Gipsy Ayres, Sr Bridget Lange. (Carol Carmagnola (Dee))**

istered nurse, a senior nurse, and a second year and junior nurse were on duty. Part of our duties as night nurses was to wake up the early morning staff. One nurse was notoriously difficult to wake. We all knew to go back and wake her a second time.

I recall with horror as a junior nurse on night shift being required to cook a piece of fish for staff on a gas stove, an appliance foreign to me. Sister was impressed with my scrambled egg with capsicum.

When I compare the advances that happened in my time, like lab strips for urinalysis compared to using chemicals over a Bunsen burner and things like disposable dressings and catheters. I pay tribute to our good outcomes in caring for the sick and the people of Camden and district.

Trainee nurses were required to attend lectures given by a tutor sister or doctor, even if on night duty when they were sleeping. There were practical nursing skills, anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, ophthalmology, etc.

We nurses had to carry out care of patients who had passed away, something you never forget. Considering our youth, we had to deal with challenging scenarios with little counselling or support. Such as the odd visit to the morgue.

One night, a teenage boy with cancer passed away when I was on night duty. The pain injections were of little help, and I was very upset at his passing. Considering the nature of our work and our youth, we were never offered counselling or support; we had to handle it as best we could.

We cared for all levels of society. A well-known local pastoral identity, Miss Thompson was admitted following a fall from her horse. When I asked, "Did you fall off your horse? She smartly informed me that you never fall off a horse; you are thrown from a horse".

We sat our final exams at Bankstown Hospital and had a graduation ceremony at Camden Hospital. I was honoured to make the graduation speech, and we were presented with certificates and Camden Hospital badges. For the first time, we wore veils denoting we were fully-fledged nursing sisters; Matron Harley and Doctor Gordon Clowes also gave speeches.

We did stints in the operating theatre where we had to do tasks such as setting up and postop cleaning and sterilising theatre and instruments. Theatre work was very tiring, requiring long hours on your feet. I can remember assisting the legendary Dr Crookston for tonsillectomies, a real pioneer of Camden. Two nursing sisters I remember fondly were Sister Camilla Kirby and Sister Jean Cameron; they were fair and very good at treating their trainees well. Some nursing sisters were Sister Camilla Kirby and Sister Jean Cameron, who were fair and very good at treating us trainees well.

Camden Hospital is no longer a training hospital. Nurses are educated at university, which has created different pathways for nurses to follow. The old hospital-based system had its merits, and I am proud to have been a part of it. Looking back, I am proud of my care of the many patients I looked after.

# Live and Local Festival

## Ian Willis

The Live and Local Festival 2024 was held over 4 weekends in June. The festival is used a launching pad for new musicians and a spot to perform for existing local musicians.

The Live and Local Festival started in Camden in 2017 with 27 artists across 14 local venues. There was music for all tastes from classical to blues, country, jazz as well as a rockabilly. Some good old rock and roll with a funky twist was popular with young fans.

All Live and Local artists are part of the creative industries. They create stories which are expressed in song and music. Musicians, poets, raconteurs, performers and writers are all storytellers. All cultures have story tellers. Storytelling as song allows the musicians to connect with their audience. Their stories are captivating, and full of emotion and meaning. These stories are one element in the process of place making and construction of community identity.

The journal has profiled a number of these musicians in the past editions. For this edition the journal profiles a new local musician, singer Allison Heart.

### Allison Heart, a local musician

Jo O'Brien

Local singer Allison Heart (also known as Kelly Allison) is performing in her second year of Live 'n' Local on the streets of Camden. The 25-year-old from



Allison Heart, Live&Local 2023, Back Galley Café (Allison Heart)

Mount Annan sings a range of songs, from soft rock and power ballads to catchy pop songs, with a bit of punk, emo, soul, and country in the mix.

With a powerful voice and a Bachelor of Music from JMC Academy in Sydney, majoring in songwriting and performance, Kelly is a natural performer and loves to tell a story with her songs. She says songwriting is the creative outlet that helps her cope with life's ups and downs. Kelly writes from her heart, and life and people inspire her writing. She has written several original songs, including *'Paralysed'*, which was recently released on Spotify and YouTube. She is working on more original songs to release in the future.



**Allison Heart , Live&Local 2024,  
Camden Hotel (I Willis)**

Although she is comfortable with the bright stage lights, it isn't easy getting started in the world of music, and it can be a challenge singing to passersby on the street. "It is hard to create a following from scratch when people don't know who you are", Kelly says, "Sometimes it feels like the world is about who you know, not what you can offer". While many are supportive, "Some people can bully you, but you just have to ignore that". Thankfully, the people of Camden have been supportive, and feedback has been positive.

Kelly's inspirations include Kelly Clarkson, Adele, and the performers Meghan Trainor and Sabrina Carpenter. Her voice soars as she belts out songs from *The Greatest Showman*. She is also interested in dancing and acting. When she is not performing, Kelly loves playing all kinds of sports and spending time with family and friends, her cat Molly, and new puppy Arlo. Live 'n' Local offers local performers such as Kelly the opportunity to perform around Camden, including cafes, pubs, and outside historic buildings such as Macaria. It also allows the public to hear up-and-coming artists and their local favourites.

# Macarthur Art Group

## Robert Gurney

The Macarthur Art Group was formed in August 2006 with 30 members. Members saw a need for the Macarthur and greater areas for artists to come together to enjoy each other's company with a spirit of comradeship. We now have over 80 members. Founding members included Bob Gurney, Shirley Kendall, and Julie Phillips.

The aim of the group is to: promote and encourage a high standard of artwork in various mediums and styles; convey the importance of presentation in a professional manner; promote the highest standards of ethics and the laws of copyright ; and respect members irrespective of the artistic endeavours.

The group's activities include the opportunity for plein air (outdoor) art trips, workshops in various mediums with tutors on hand to assist members and opportunity to attend art classes conducted by professionally qualified members. There is an annual exhibition, with the opportunity to enter the 'Art of Sydney Art Awards' held in January run by the Combined Art Societies.

In this journal we profile Patricia Johnston, Bob Gurney and Michelle Arentz.

## Patricia Johnston

Patricia Johnston

I became a practising artist by a circuitous route in a household active in arts and crafts, where my mother taught me sewing, knitting, crocheting, millinery, glove making, silk flower making, weaving, and spinning. Matching colours, textures and design became 2nd nature.

After school ended, my mother enrolled me in East Sydney Technical College for an art course (now the National Art School) where she herself had trained, but my father insisted I follow an academic career at the university, and I eventually trained as a research librarian at the great Fisher Library, University of Sydney. One of my duties was to collate a collection of books at the veterinary school to incorporate into the university collection, and there I met my future husband.

Together, we set off to Camden to live in 1959 and to establish a veterinary pathology laboratory and a research library at the new University Farms, Werombi Road, to serve the final-year veterinary students in residence and their tutors with teaching resources.



**Camden Art Prize Opening. A portrait of Patricia Johnston by Rizwana Ahmad at the opening of the 2024 Camden Art Prize (Cdn Art Prize 2024)**

I dabbled in painting and china painting a bit to create murals for our new home in Elderslie, but I jumped at the chance to draw and paint with other artists under the guidance of Alan Baker, a professional artist who had come to reside in the district.

Alan Baker was vice president of the prestigious Royal Art Society of NSW, and he not only critiqued our work but also taught us the basics of traditional art in the portrait studies set up in the Camden Primary School for two hours every Wednesday night. For a year, he allowed us only to draw as he considered this the best method to capture immediate impressions from life.

My friends Nola Tegel and Olive McAleer and I decided to further our studies in life drawing and painting at the Royal Art Society with Harry Hanke, a former Archibald prize winner as a tutor and continued to gain its Diploma of

Art producing major works in still life, life study, portraiture, and landscape painting. As firm friends, we sparked off each other in our enthusiasm and spent many happy hours picnicking and 'plein air' painting in the beautiful Camden countryside.

Our first overseas art tour was with the Royal Art Society's trip to Bali, then a very primitive location with no electricity but stunning landscapes, food, and culture. Later, I was to lead art and cultural tours overseas to Europe, visiting famous artists' studios and the magnificent art galleries of France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Austria, Russia, and the Czech Republic. What an inspiration...

After these stints, I would often take a break to visit Asia with my friend Marjorie Baker, Alan's widow, as my companion. She had an extensive knowledge of Asian arts, and we had so much fun exploring dusty little shops and museums in Vietnam, Thailand, China, Cambodia, and Laos and extending my appreciation of Asian art and craft.

I loved to paint 'plein air' landscapes to capture the atmosphere of these wonderful excursions, reserving my studio studies for flower and still life paintings, working from life to give the liveliness and honesty of impressionism.

I continued my studies in art at Campbelltown TAFE, studying sculpture, painting, drawing, painting, ceramics, and graphic art to gain a Diploma in Fine Arts. Printing became a fascinating extension of drawing and painting, which I greatly enjoyed, and I always sought to further my knowledge of this difficult craft.

Art has added such richness to my life, forming enduring friendships, travelling to exciting venues and gaining a deep love and appreciation of the wonderful world around us.

## **Bob Gurney**

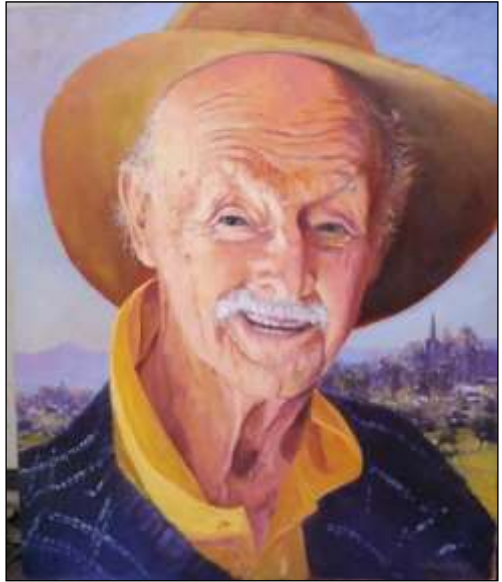
Bob Gurney and Kathleen Thomas

Bob Gurney was born in Sydney in 1944 and resides at Camden, NSW. Drawing since early childhood, copying his favourite comic heroes and characters, and making his own private comic strips, he continued to draw portraits and the world around him.

After attending a life drawing and Lettering courses at East Sydney Tech-

nical College (now the National Art School) from the age of sixteen, he commenced occasional sign writing, drawing portraits, city and landscapes, and animals up to 1991 before finally taking up the brush. He then commenced portraiture and still life painting for several years in oils and acrylics under the tuition of Archibald and Doug Moran finalist Dave Thomas.

Bob has since been tutored and guided by numerous renowned Australian artists, and regularly attends workshops to learn the various mediums, and hone his technical knowledge.



**Portrait of Vic Boardman by Bob Gurney (B Gurney)**

Proficient in oils, acrylics, drawing, pen and wash, charcoal and pastel; Bob's work now consists mainly of land and seascapes, with occasional human and animal portraiture, in which he has developed a realist approach.

Bob considers his art to be in the traditional representational style and holds workshops and demonstrations for art societies, charity organisations, and galleries, and enters his works in local art and art prize exhibitions state wide.

He is a member, and a co-founder of his local Macarthur Art Group Inc, which was founded in 2006, and is a member of the Friends of Campbelltown Art Centre, Oatley 101 Society of Artists, and the Liverpool Art Society.

Bob was a major participant in the painting of Miss Llewella Davies OAM for the Camden Council People-scape project in 2001. He was the honoured recipient of the 2022 Local Australia Day, Arts and Culture Award.'

## **Michele Arentz**

Michele Arentz

I am a multi-disciplined, practising artist with an Advanced Diploma in fine Art, having studied at both the National Art School, Southwestern Sydney

Institute TAFE, and Sydney TAFE.

I have worked in a variety of fields in both graphic design and fine art as a freelance and in-house artist, in animation, producing artwork for film features, TV commercials and advertising, illustration for educational books, and videos, electrical engineering and graphic design whilst also exhibiting my work as an artist in various art prizes and shows.

But my greatest love in art is depicting heritage architecture, for which I have received heritage awards from both Campbelltown and Liverpool Councils. Most recently, I have worked as a vocational instructor in art to young people in custody (Juvenile Justice, The Justice Department and Family and Community Services, Attorney Generals Dept) for approximately 22 years as well as curating exhibitions on their behalf, some as fundraising for local charities such as Marcia Women's Refuge Campbelltown, Rotary, Ronald Mc Donald House. I have also facilitated community workshops for Liverpool, Campbelltown and Camden Councils, Traxide Youth Health Services, Mission Australia.



**Camden Courthouse in the Street Art Exhibition 2023 by Michele Arentz (Camden**

Having recently retired, I have enjoyed having more time to facilitate several workshops for both adult and young people in the local Camden community such as “Something to Say”, “Unlock Camden”, and for participating in local events such as “Cultural fusion” and “Camden Kerbside “and Belgenny Farm Open Day.

Michele has held many exhibitions and won numerous awards over many years. Most recently, Camden Council invited me to complete three murals, which are now displayed permanently as part of the “Dairy Series” and depict the history of the farm over time, as part of the Nepean River Trail Public Art. I also provided line drawings for the signage for the same and for the “Miss Davies” walk.

## **The history behind Macarthur’s name is complex: But we shouldn’t rename it, local historians say**

**Alexa Dyne**

Despite ongoing debates over Sydney locations named after Lachlan Macquarie, there is little appetite to rename the region in south-west Sydney that is named after John Macarthur. Macarthur – a reference to John Macarthur, an officer in the NSW Corps, has been the name of the Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly Shire area since the 1970s in spite of his sordid history.

John Macarthur was known to be a difficult and at times rude person said Andrew Allen, a local studies librarian at Campbelltown City Library. “But he was certainly no Lachlan Macquarie,” said Allen. Macarthur owned over 27,000 acres of land in his namesake area. It was there that he ran a profitable sheep farming business and was one of the first people to produce Merino wool in NSW.

Historian Margaret Steven writes in John Macarthur’s biography that one of his critics believed he knew, “no medium between friendship and enmity.” She also noted that on a particular occasion Macarthur boasted to the governor at the time, Sir Ralph Darling, that he had “never yet failed in ruining a man who had become obnoxious to him.”



**Macarthur Railway Station is named after John Macarthur (Alexa Dyne)**



### **Macarthur Square is in Campbelltown. (Alexa Dyne)**

He was reported to have paid his convict labourers with rum, leading to clashes with his superiors who were trying to crack down on drunkenness in the colony. He was ultimately a figure head in the 1808 Rum Rebellion, a coup d'état led by the military to depose Governor William Bligh.

When asked whether Macarthur is an appropriate name for the region, Allen said that John Macarthur's achievements as a pioneer of the New South Wales wool industry were significant enough to overlook his personality.

Allen also said that we should consider Macarthur as equally representing the name of John's wife, Elizabeth Macarthur, who continued to run the family's wool business by herself when John left for 6 years in 1811 to go England.

In 2013, Jeff McGill wrote an opinion piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about how Campbelltown, Camden and Picton-based Wollondilly Shire residents were fed up with the media collectivising anything south-west of Fairfield, as Sydney's south-west, despite being 30 kilometres away. One week later, Channel 7 responded, announcing that they would stop using the term "Sydney's south-west" and instead say "Sydney's Macarthur region."

Dr Ian Willis, a public historian and honorary fellow at the University of



**Built in 1793 for John and Elizabeth Macarthur, Elizabeth Farm is now a museum. (Photo: Wikipedia.org)**

Wollongong says the Macarthur name has become associated with a regional identity.

Dr Willis wrote in his blog, Camden History Notes, that the creation of the region's own A-league soccer team, Macarthur FC, in 2018, was testament to the region's growing sense of identity that was separate from the rest of Western Sydney.

Dr Willis says that the Macarthur name is integral to the identity of community groups like Macarthur FC. When asked whether he supported any argument for changing the name, he responded, "no."

Dr Willis said that while Macarthur now stands for more than just the colonial family namesake, John Macarthur's legacy is nothing compared to what happened during his time. "The British Empire was a violent place," said Dr Willis.

Campbelltown City librarian, Andrew Allen says the arguments for changing the name of sites honouring Lachlan Macquarie are more substantial than Macarthur. Lachlan Macquarie, the fifth governor of New South Wales, or-



**Macarthur FC fan section, ‘The Bullpen.’ (Photo: *The West Australian*)**

dered the killing of First Nations people that led to the Appin massacre on the 17th of April 1816 where 14 Aboriginal men died.

“It’s a stain on Macquarie’s name that we cannot ignore, and yet there are countless places in Sydney named after him,” said Allen.

Sydney locations that bear the Macquarie name include Governor Macquarie Tower, Macquarie Street where Parliament House is, and Macquarie University. It is also the name of an Australian bank.

The Campbelltown City Council, where many local sites reference Macarthur’s name including Macarthur Square, schools, community groups and Macarthur Station, did not respond to a request for comment. Nor did Camden City Council, which is named after John and Elizabeth Macarthur’s farm, Camden Park.

# CHS Annual Report 2023-2024

## President's Report

Ian Willis

I am pleased to present the Camden Historical Society's annual report. The society has had a busy and challenging year. The society continues to contribute to several community roles, including acting as a centre for volunteering, building resilient communities, and supporting local tourism.

### Advocacy

The society continues to tell the Camden story and support local heritage by contributing to comments on DAs and other developments on public exhibitions.

### Participation in the community

The society has attended several community events, including: Unlock Camden History; Week Sept 2023; with guided walks Camden Fusion Festive, Feb 2024; with a guided walk and backstage museum tour; Volunteer Expo at Oran Park 18/5/24; I spoke to Narellan Anglican's over 55s in July.

### Speakers at society meetings

Speakers at monthly meetings have included:

Sept 2023 – Stories by members as part of History Week

October 2023 – Ian Willis – Cowpastures Memorials

November 2023 - Ian Ramsay – Scottish Ancestors

December 2023 – Christmas party – trivia quiz by Ian Willis

February 2024 – Trevor Jenson - Maryland

March 2024 - Jeff McGill – Ancestors at Brownlow Hill

April 2024 – Julie Wrigley – Camden Chinese Market Gardeners

May 2024 – Stories by members as part of the Heritage Festival

June 2024 Phillipa Percy – Nepean River Art Trail

July 2024 – Michael Ligato – Redevelopment of Camden Civic Centre

August 2024 - AGM

### Volunteers

Volunteers continue to do a great job in various capacities, including staffing the front desk, conducting research, attending functions, advocating, and other activities.

Volunteer coordinator Rene Rem manages the front desk roster well. He rounds up new volunteers and solves many issues that crop up. There are currently over 50 volunteers on the roster.

## **Museum**

Last year, the museum attracted over 6,000 visitors, including school visits and community groups. Trish Clark and Rene Rem, assisted by Francis Warner and Lee Stratton, look after school visits.

Under Fletcher's guidance, the Clark exhibition was launched in November 2023. The world-renowned Professor Graham Clark gave an interesting and informative address about the multi-channel Cochlear Implant-Bionic ear to those at the exhibition launch. Clark grew up in Camden and his father, Colin, had a chemist shop in Argyle Street.

Julie Wrigley manages the displays in the galleria outside the museum, which change regularly. The current theme is the Camden Red Cross and its 110 year history.

## **Membership**

Society membership is 125 individuals, comprising 96 memberships.

## **Administration**

I want to thank Fletcher for his ongoing efforts in managing the society's financials, auditing book stock levels, and managing the membership database.

Under Fletcher's guidance, we now use MailChimp to distribute newsletters and notices about upcoming events to members. Fletcher is the go-to person for advice on IT matters. Rene continues to manage the society's correspondence through ordinary mail and emails, and the museum's general management.

## **Community Partnership**

The society continues partnering with Camden Library and the Camden Area Family History Society. Joint activities have included: Heritage Week in April; History Week in September; and the collection of photographs on Camden Images Past and Present.

Negotiations with Council officers regarding a suitable lease agreement with the society, the museum's occupation of the council-owned building, and the maintenance of the building are ongoing. The society has engaged legal advice and received a grant from Museums and Galleries NSW to help progress this matter.

## **Communication**

The society publishes a journal twice a year and a newsletter three times a

year and editors have been Lee Stratton, Rene Rem and myself. I am the journal editor. A number of members contribute stories to the Back Then page of *The District Reporter*.

The society has a strong online presence with its website, Camden History, managed by Warren Sims. Rene Rem looks after the Camden Museum Facebook page, and I look after our presence on the Google business pages, where some visitors have uploaded photos.

The society launched a new book in April 2024, *A History of Camden Chinese Market Gardeners 1899 to 1993*, edited by Ian Willis and Julie Wrigley. I addressed Camden Rotary in July about the book.

### **Welfare**

Volunteer Janet Stait-Gardner follows up with members with ‘get well’ messages and an ‘expression of sympathy’.

### **Financial assistance**

Camden Council continues to support the society through a yearly subsidy covering insurance, providing two storage units at Narellan, and maintaining the museum.

### **Final Thanks**

In conclusion, I wish to thank everyone on the committee, volunteers and others who have assisted the society over the past year. The society remains in a strong financial position.

## **Committee’s Financial Report 2024**

Fletcher Joss

### **Principal Activities**

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were the operation of the Camden Museum, the opening of the Professor Graeme Clark exhibition, the publication of “A History of Camden Chinese Market Gardeners 1899-1993”, production of publications on local history, including a journal and newsletter, holding regular meetings featuring guest speakers, conducting walking tours of Camden, conducting, and supporting research into local history and providing support for local schools.

### **Significant Changes**

The completion and opening of the Professor Clark exhibition marked a significant event in the society’s history. Not only was there a physical change to the museum and the acquisition of items of international significance, but it was also the first exhibition with significant audiovisual content.

The Chinese market gardeners book was the first original book published by the museum using “print on demand” technology (similar to Janice’s books). The technology means we do not have to invest significant money in stock.

Camden Council has presented the society with a draft of a new version of the Memorandum of Understanding for the continued operation of the museum. The draft document may ask the society to share the museum with unnamed others, impose extra costs upon the society, and give the council the right to appropriate anything in the society’s collection. We have sought legal advice and advice from the Museum & Galleries of NSW. The advice is to seek a formal lease with Camden Council for the museum space. The NSW Government has approved a grant of \$2,000 toward the production of the lease.

### **Operating Result.**

The society’s activities for the year produced a surplus of \$3,269, including the \$2,000 grant for lease preparation. Last year’s operations yielded \$5,166, and this year’s surplus was projected at \$2,000 (excluding maintenance, equipment and new exhibits). The result is largely in line with expectations once the impact of expenses associated with opening the Professor Clark exhibition and the printing of the Chinese market gardeners book are considered. Next year is unclear as the museum is likely to be closed for several weeks for repair, and the outcome of negotiations for the continued use of the museum is uncertain.

## Camden's Festival of Youth

*"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"*  
(William Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet')

### Jo O'Brien

Festivals and street parades are a long-standing tradition in Camden, as explored in the Camden 2024 History Week exhibition, 'Don't rain on my parade'. From soldiers marching in WWI and annual ANZAC Day and Australia Day parades; to celebrations of spring, roses and the Golden Fleece; Camden locals have lined Argyle Street and John Street to be part of these events.



**Argyle Street Camden NSW parade, 1964. POSSIBLY the annual Rose Festival. A.H & I. float with Miss Camden Easter show girl (Joy Riley, Camden Images)**

Festivals from the 1960s have been fondly remembered by locals, in various publications, posts on social media, and in conversations with those who were there. The Festival of the Golden Fleece, celebrating the 150th anniversary of wool production in Australia was held in October 1960, with events every day from October 22<sup>nd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>. Film of a mock bushranger hold-up still exists, along with various photographs and programmes. The Rose Festival is also remembered, with stories, photographs and memorabilia, although there

are conflicting references about the details and which years it was held.

A series of photographs on Camden Images show clear, colour images of a street parade from the 1960s. Contributed by Joy Riley and Fred Sharpe, they are labelled ‘possibly the annual Rose Festival c1964’, and they illustrate a succession of colourful floats travelling along Argyle Street. Older Camden locals have memories of being in or witnessing this parade. However, further investigation has uncovered the forgotten name of this event. It was not the Rose Festival. The street parade first held in September 1964 was part of the Camden Festival of Youth.

The Camden Festival of Youth was an initiative of the Camden Youth Council. This organisation was formed in 1962, its aims were to co-ordinate and foster youth activities and obtain financial assistance for youth associations in need. At the first meeting at Camden High School in November 1962, the first President elected was M. Munro, with secretary W. Barter, treasurer Rowan Moore, and vice-president Noel Riordan. Guest speaker Mr Troy, Deputy Director of the Department of Youth Welfare in N.S.W., spoke of ‘an annual “Festival of Youth” which would above all else foster and keep alive the



**Argyle Street Camden NSW parade. Netball/Olympic float with Maureen Gray in green netball uniform Festival of Youth 1964 (Joy Riley, Camden Images)**



**Argyle Street Camden NSW parade. Lions Club float with Del & Robyn O'Leary. Festival of Youth 1964 (Joy Riley, Camden Images)**

interest of the community for youth activities' (*Camden News*, Oct 31, 1962)

The Youth Council Committee met in March 1964 “to formulate a plan to hold a Festival of Youth Week” (*Camden News*, Mar 25, 1964). It was decided to “have a procession of floats by the various organisations symbolising youth” among other events. By May, basic plans were set, with a grand procession to go through the streets of Camden on September 19, and displays and events throughout the following week. (*Camden News*, May 13, 1964)

Letters from secretaries Miss Carol Cousins and Mrs Eileen Flynn were sent to various organisations asking them to participate in a procession of floats as part of Youth Festival Week to be held from Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> to Saturday September 26<sup>th</sup> (CHS files), the aim of this festival being to promote the various activities open to the youth of the Camden District. By this time the president was Ulric Parsons, a local schoolteacher - the youth council over the years included a mix of teachers, community leaders, and young locals on its committee.

Over the next weeks, plans were announced, excitement was building, and trophies were donated to be presented to sectional winners of the procession. A six-page supplement was included in the September 16 edition of the *Cam-*



**The Lions Club float with the addition of a globe (Festival of Youth 1965) (Fred Sharpe, Camden Images)**

*den News* with a full week program, including a variety of events such as sporting activities, shows, and displays, and...

‘Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>: 1.00pm. Grand Procession from Elizabeth Street to Showground via Argyle Street. Featuring decorated floats, marching teams, commercial displays, youth groups and bands, from Camden-Campbelltown, Parramatta Pipe, Boy Scouts.’

This was to be followed by a mass display of youth activities at Camden Showground.

The parade was a success with the *Camden News* proclaiming:

“YOUTH... fine ambassadors for their town and district. BRIGHT START FOR FESTIVAL

Perfect weather and a gay procession of floats combined to make a spectacular opening for the Camden Youth Festival last Saturday afternoon...A great deal of variety was seen in the floats and vehicles taking part”

At the official opening Sir Denzil Macarthur-Onslow said: ‘By their example in organising such a week as this the Camden Youth Council had encour-



**A Scout float at a Camden Parade (Festival of Youth, 1965)  
(Fred Sharpe, Camden Images)**

aged and fired with enthusiasm all organisations connected with youth activities in the district' (*Camden News*, Sept 23, 1964)

Trophies were awarded, and the AH&I float "won the admiration of all who saw it" as well as the prize for the most typical float. The newspaper carried more than four pages of pictures of the parade, a list of the floats, and stories on all of the Festival of Youth events.

It is interesting to reflect on the other events of that year, the devastating floods in Camden in June 1964 and the wildly popular Beatles tour. How did these impact local youth, and did these events inspire the desire to make this festival a success?

It was hoped the Festival of Youth would become an annual affair. A second Festival of Youth was held in September 1965, with many of the same floats and organisations participating again. The similarity in the pictures of these two events adds to the confusion with photographs and memories. Subtle differences in the background, carefully dated photographs, and contemporary newspaper articles, are the only way to distinguish the pictures from one year to the next.

An undated letter sent by the Camden Youth Council states that 'Unfortunately, the Festival of Youth in 1965 has overstrained our resources' and sets out an affiliation fee of 1 pound (\$2) per annum – indicating it was

sent in early 1966 (CHS files). By this time James Hill is President, with Noeline Gray as Secretary, and David Pryce as Treasurer. Another letter was sent on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1966, announcing the intention of the Youth Council to hold a Spring Carnival in conjunction with Shopping Week, to 'afford all organisations in the district an opportunity to raise funds for themselves' (CHS files). However, due to a lack of interest which was "severely criticised" by Mr Hill (*Camden News* 14 Sept 1966), the 1966 event did not go ahead.

Undaunted, the Youth Council came up with another plan. In January 1967 they sent a letter to Camden Council proposing a Rose Festival for 1967 (*Camden News*, Jan 25, 1967), and at the February council meeting council approved the "Rose Festival" to raise funds for Camden Hospital (*Camden News*, Feb 22, 1967).

The event moved to early November, coinciding with the popular St John's Flower Show, and included the crowning of a Rose Queen, and a ball, as well as the judging of local rose gardens. Garden shows and competitions were popular throughout this era and changing the format and name of the festival proved successful. The parade was well attended, though it was reported that the "entries consisted mainly of trade vehicles without any attempt being made to decorate them" (*Camden News*, Nov 1, 1967). Despite this comment there were still several decorated entries pictured in the November 1 edition of the paper.

In 1968, the Rose Festival again featured an opening parade where there seems to have been more effort made to decorate floats, thousands lined the main street to watch the Rose Festival parade despite blustering winds. (*Camden News*, Oct 30, 1968)

Changes were proposed to the 1969 Rose Festival in May 1969: '...more emphasis on roses and less on fund-raising... the decision was made to dispense with the usual street parade and Rose Princess campaign... there is a lack of public interest in any part of the Rose Festival that calls for volunteer effort to prepare... few people were prepared to offer help in building and decorating floats.'

A later date was selected to avoid clashes with other festivals. (*Camden News* May 28, 1969). The event was held in the first week of November, with a flower show and Rose Ball, and although the event was less spectacular than in previous years it was hoped it would continue, and plans were made to reintroduce Rose Princesses in 1970 (*Camden News*, Dec 10, 1969). However, by the following October it was announced that there would be no

Rose Ball, due to ‘*very little interest in staging the annual Rose Festival*’, and that it was too late and too difficult to get volunteers. (*Camden News* October 7, 1970)

It appears that the change in emphasis to a garden related theme would ultimately prove more memorable, and the “Festival of Youth” slipped from the collective memory, to become mixed with memories of the Rose Festivals on the 1960s.

Hopefully now the Festival of Youth Parades of 1964 and 1965 will be remembered with their correct names, and the correct titles and dates can be attributed to these beautiful photographs.

Many thanks to the enthusiastic contributors to this story who shared their recollections and photographs. More photographs and stories are welcome as we look further into Camden’s Festivals and street parades.

The research for this article was only possible thanks to two underappreciated local resources. The original letters from the Youth Council still exist in the Camden Historical Society’s excellent archive. And the not yet digitised 1960s Camden News articles were accessed by scrolling through microfilm at Camden Area Family History Society. Without this “old fashioned” research, the Festival of Youth would remain a lost and forgotten aspect of Camden’s social history

Camden Images is a unique collection of significant historic and recent images from the Camden area, held by the Camden Historical Society and Camden Council Library Service, and accessible online.



# **Unlock Camden 2023, the fifth year of the festival**

**Ian Willis**

Unlock Camden 2023 was on Saturday, 2 September, from 10am - 3pm at the beginning of 2023 History Week. The 2023 History Week. It was the fifth year of the festival. Unlock Camden encouraged local folk to tell their own story in a social media campaign run by the Heritage Advisory Committee called #mycamdenstory. The Unlock Camden 2023 program celebrated Camden's history and heritage. The activities were centred around John Street as in the past, with the addition of activities at Camden Library. For the first time, there were activities at Camden Markets located on the Camden Town Farm in Exeter Street.

The official opening was at 10am at the Camden Town Farm Market site by the Camden mayor Ashleigh Cagney. The Alan Baker Gallery Art Gallery hosted Weaving with Aunty Michelle Hailes. Several art activities were hosted at the Camden market site of the Camden Town Farm. They included En Plein Air with Bob Gurney, Charcoal White Gum with Tracey Prioste, Botanical Drawing with Belle Mitchell and Heritage Drawing with Michele Arentz. At the Camden Library was a talk by Taylor Clarke on family history, the Burraborang Valley's future, and an Unlock Camden Small Works Art Exhibition. The Alan Baker Gallery Art Gallery hosted Weaving with Aunty Michelle Hailes.

Several art activities were hosted at the Camden market site of the Camden Town Farm. They included En Plein Air with Bob Gurney, Charcoal White Gum with Tracey Prioste, Botanical Drawing with Belle Mitchell and Heritage Drawing with Michele Arentz. Starting at the Alan Baker Art Gallery, there were four guided history walks of the Camden town centre starting at 10.30am, then the half-hour until 1.30pm by members of the Camden Historical Society.

Camden Council was awarded \$25,000 for interpreting and promoting heritage through the Heritage NSW 2023-2025 Local Government Heritage Grants Program towards Unlock Camden 2023. The grant required a dollar-matched contribution from the council.

## **Unlock Camden begins in 2019**

The first Unlock Camden was held in 2019. It was the initiative of the Camden Council Heritage Advisory Committee under the dynamic leadership of committee member Laura Jane Aulsebrook. The committee hoped the event would focus community attention on the area's rich colonial history.



(Camden Advertiser, 13 March 2019) Timed to coincide with the History Week conducted by the History Council of New South Wales, the day was held on the first Saturday in September. The first Unlock Camden was based around the Alan Baker Art Gallery on John Street, with several stalls from community organisations. On the day, the windy spring weather proved challenging for stall holders and caused havoc with tables and umbrellas, while other events in Camden were cancelled. Heritage Advisory Committee Chair Councillor Cindy Cagney said, 'It was an exciting idea and a positive for the community'. (Camden Advertiser, 13 March 2019) Committee member Laura Jane Aulsebrook, a 'local identity and Camden's living piece of history' launched the #mycamdenstory social media campaign.

"Residents are encouraged to share photos and stories that showcase their Camden story, historic and modern photos, and anything that shares why they are in Camden and why they love Camden," said Ms Aulsebrook. (Camden Advertiser, 19 August 2019) The day was highlighted by walking tours of the historic town centre, live music, and displays at the Alan Baker Art Gallery and Camden Museum. The Camden Heritage Walking tour and brochure were relaunched, music was provided by the Camden Community Band and the Honey Sippers, and their owners displayed several vintage cars. Organiser Ms Aulsebrook said, 'This was a chance to learn more about their history and why they are so important to the fabric of the community.' (Camden Advertiser, 10 September 2019) The day was quite successful despite the council not allocating any specific budget for the occasion. The aim of the day and the associated events was to tell the Camden story through walks, art, images, stories, and a host of other activities.

