

# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

Journal of the Camden Historical Society



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# **CAMDEN HISTORY**

Journal of the Camden Historical Society Inc.

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P.O. Box 566, Camden, NSW 2570. Online <<http://www.camdenhistory.org.au>>

## **Meetings**

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

## **Museum**

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

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

The Journal is published in March and September each year. The editor would be pleased to receive articles broadly covering the history of the Camden district. Correspondence can be sent to the society's postal address. The 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.

## **Cover: St John's Church and Cemetery Camden**

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# President's Message

Ian Ramsay

## A Difficult Year

We are now in the latter part of 2021 and as we look back it has been in more ways than one a difficult year.

However let's now focus on the positives that have happened at the Museum and the Society.

We were able to conduct a great evening with Sue Williams who wonderfully entertained us with the background story behind her book *Eliza-beth and Elizabeth*.

Then we were presented with a wonderful insight into the history of building on Argyle Street by Diane. The amount of painstaking research that Diane has injected into this project is a credit.

Earlier in the year a small and dedicated group met and discussed the viability of organising a group who would dedicate their time and effort into maintaining the textile and fabrics within the museum.

The group did eventuate and has started work and even though it was cut short by Covid it proved to be beneficial as well as a learning experience for those involved.



**Camden Historical Society President Ian Ramsay at the Camden Museum (L Stratton)**

Once we have Covid behind us this group will again reconvene and continue this valuable work.

Of course the biggest and boldest project by far is the Graeme Clark Collection.

Work is still progressing with the venture and of course we still have a way to go yet but there has been a lot of work and negotiations being undertaken. That is where we have been in 2021 and a quick overview of where we are going in the future.

Allow me to quote a famous quote from the past, JFK once famously said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but rather ask, what can I do for my country?”

Perhaps we could all ask that same question, “what can I do for my society and museum?”

I trust this finds you all keeping well and I look forward to seeing you soon.

# **From farmland to major botanic garden and scientific hub**

## **Reflections on achieving the vision for the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan.**

**Peter Cuneo**

Conceived as an important regional greenspace and botanic garden in the mid 1980's, the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan (ABG) was opened in 1988 as a major bicentennial project. The vision was to create a unique native plant garden to complement the existing Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney site and the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden at Mount Tomah. With an exclusive focus on the fascinating and incredibly diverse flora from across Australia, horticulturists set about establishing new garden areas including the very popular theme gardens and picnic areas.



**Signage for the new botanic garden at Mount Annan announced by the New South Wales Wran Labor Government in 1984. The land had been part of the property portfolio controlled by the Macarthur Development Board in the early 1970s. (RBGDT)**



**Construction underway in 1986 of the lake at the centre of the garden complex. The site was originally part of the 1824 grant allocated to William Howe called Glenlee in the Cowpastures. All located on Dharawal Country. (RBGDT)**

The garden became a ‘great experiment’ in native plant horticulture with staff collecting, documenting, propagating and growing plants from a wide range of climatic zones across Australia. In the early development years the focus was also on the horticultural development of key feature areas such as the Connections Garden, which was created as ‘microcosm of the Australian flora’, and now includes plants from the rainforests of North Queensland through to the sandplains of Western Australia!

Master planning for the Garden in 2000 identified the importance of conserving native vegetation and also outlined a process of consolidation, restoration and expansion of these important native woodlands as habitat. Large scale management of woody weeds such as African Olive were identified as a high priority, as well as the linking of vegetation remnants to form ecologically healthy “green corridors” across the Garden and beyond, enhancing the possibilities for the movement of native fauna now increasingly attracted to the site.

Today, the garden is an impressive landscape mosaic of theme gardens, natu-



**The detail of the Australian PlantBank at the Australian Botanic Gardens Mount Annan. The facility is an internationally significant scientific research facility to safeguard plant species for the future. It was opened by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales in 2013. (John Gollings, 2021)**

ral woodlands, grasslands and lakes which now provides important habitat for over 170 bird species. ABG has also become a regionally significant conservation reserve, that includes some excellent examples of endangered ecological communities such as Cumberland Plain Woodland (recently listed as critically endangered). The presence of native woodlands and fauna is very much part of the visitor experience at Mount Annan, where it is now common to see families of Wallaroos (Hill Kangaroo or Euros) and Swamp Wallabies at a number of locations across the Garden.

The increasing importance of the regional conservation values of the Garden, has been paralleled by the impressive development of the conservation science program based at ABG since the garden's inception. Flagship threatened species conservation projects such as the Wollemi Pine in the mid 1990's demonstrated the strength and capacity of the research and the seed-bank teams based at ABG, and quickly established the seedbank program as a major repository for NSW threatened species.

International partnerships from 2003 with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

(UK) Millennium Seedbank increased the momentum of this seed conservation work which culminated with the Australian PlantBank which opened in 2013, and is now a recognised global leader in wild native seed conservation. The PlantBank seed collection continues to play an important role in providing seed for the living collection development at ABG, and significantly holds over 1900 NSW threatened species seed collections as an ‘insurance policy’ against loss of wild populations.

As Australia’s oldest scientific organisation, the Royal Botanic Gardens scientific expertise is at the core of the organisation, which has guided the development of ABG development since its inception. Botanical science relies heavily on the existence of dried and labelled plant specimens held in a herbarium collection. These catalogued and accurately identified plant speci-



**The construction of new National Herbarium of NSW at Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan. The facility is being transferred from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and its purpose is to safeguard the collection of over 1.4 million botanical species. The Herbarium and all the scientific facilities will be combined under the Australian Institute of Botanical Science. (P Cuneo RBGDT 2021)**



**Olive mulching machine at ABG Mount Annan. African olive has been a major problem weed with over 70 hectares of dense infestation now removed by mechanical control. (P Cuneo RBGDT 2021)**

mens provide a critical resource and reference point for botanical, ecological and genetic studies. The National Herbarium of NSW located at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney site holds over 1.4 million botanical specimens, including collections from 1770, made by botanists Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander on Captain James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific. Due to declining space for the collection and environmental controls in the Robert Brown Building where the herbarium collection has been held since 1982, a decision was made to move the collection to a new purpose built facility at ABG.

When completed in late 2021, the impressive new National Herbarium of NSW building (located next to the Australian PlantBank), features six climate-controlled rammed earth vaults to house this historic and contemporary collection of botanical specimens. The co-location of the internationally significant herbarium and seed collections at ABG, combined with the impressive living collection of Australian native plants represents a major consolidation of the RBG scientific presence at ABG and western Sydney. Importantly, this scientific research capacity will continue to advance our knowledge of the unique and diverse Australian flora, and support effective conservation measures as we respond to climate change and other threats

state-wide and beyond.

Attracting over 500,000 visitors each year and now well established, the garden has come a long way since the warm and windswept official opening day in October 1988 when the royal couple, the Duke and Duchess of York politely said “looks very nice but we’ll come back when it has grown a bit”.

Although still a young garden, ABG really is the contemporary expression of a botanic garden, and offers so many opportunities for visitors including flower displays, walking tracks, picnic areas, conservation woodlands, education programs, wedding venues, wildlife, garden inspiration and recreational space. The development of the landscape over the past 33 years, combined with the increased scientific presence focussed on the Australian flora, ABG truly is the ‘jewel in the crown’. With plenty of space and scope for future developments, ABG has a very bright future, and in so many ways has already fulfilled the bold vision articulated at its inception in the mid 1980s.

### **Biography**

Dr Peter Cuneo is Manager, Seedbank & Restoration Research at the Australian PlantBank. Peter has been involved in the development of ABG since its inception and has held a range of horticultural, technical, planning and scientific roles.

More information on the development and history of the garden

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-14/curious-sydney3a-27a-jewel-in-the-crown27-botanic-gardens/8886774?nw=0>



**Wallaroos in the Cumberland Woodland in the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan (P Cuneo RBGDT)**

# **Larkin Place: From Saleyard to Carpark**

## **Dianne Matterson**

Until 1940, the Larkin Place carpark was occupied by Camden saleyards and thousands of cattle, horses, sheep, pigs and poultry were sold here for many decades. In 1883, Robert Howe Inglis began his auction business, holding sales each month in Picton and at 'other places when required'. From 1889, he conducted regular stock auctions in Camden 'near the corner of Hill and Argyle Streets'.<sup>1</sup> Trading as R H Inglis, the business grew and Robert took on his nephew, Joseph (Ernie) Inglis, as a partner, four years later. Robert and Ernie sometimes held Camden stock auctions in conjunction with Robert's elder brother, William, who ultimately traded as William Inglis & Son, and had been a Sydney auctioneer since 1867.<sup>2</sup>

### **Inglis saleyards**

The date of Robert's departure from the site near the corner of Hill and Argyle Streets is unknown, but he occupied the rear of the Plough and Harrow Hotel and Nelson Whiteman's shops (now the Capitol Arcade) by at least 1895, when the hotel's owner, Charles Arnold, 'built replacement saleyards' here for the Inglis business. The new yards were noteworthy: a rostrum was constructed for the auctioneers, additional yards were added (now totalling 32) and included a larger mustering yard, 8 covered pig pens, new gates and 'substantial fencing', all built by Fred Doust. The saleyards were accessed from Mitchell Street via a roadway behind the Catholic Church, as well as from Argyle Street along a lane on the eastern side of the Plough and Harrow Hotel and another between the two Whiteman shops. (See Diagram 1; Photos 1 & 2 below) Sales were held every Tuesday and were a meeting point for farmers from all over the district.<sup>3</sup> Robert and Ernie's partnership was dissolved on 2 October 1895, however, and Ernie moved to Sydney where he worked as an auctioneer for William Inglis at Flemington saleyards.<sup>4</sup> In 1896, Bill Larkin, later Captain Larkin and then later still Major Larkin (due to his role in the military), began working at the saleyards, initially as a booking clerk, but after obtaining his auctioneer's license, he also conducted auctions under the watchful eye of Robert Inglis.<sup>5</sup>

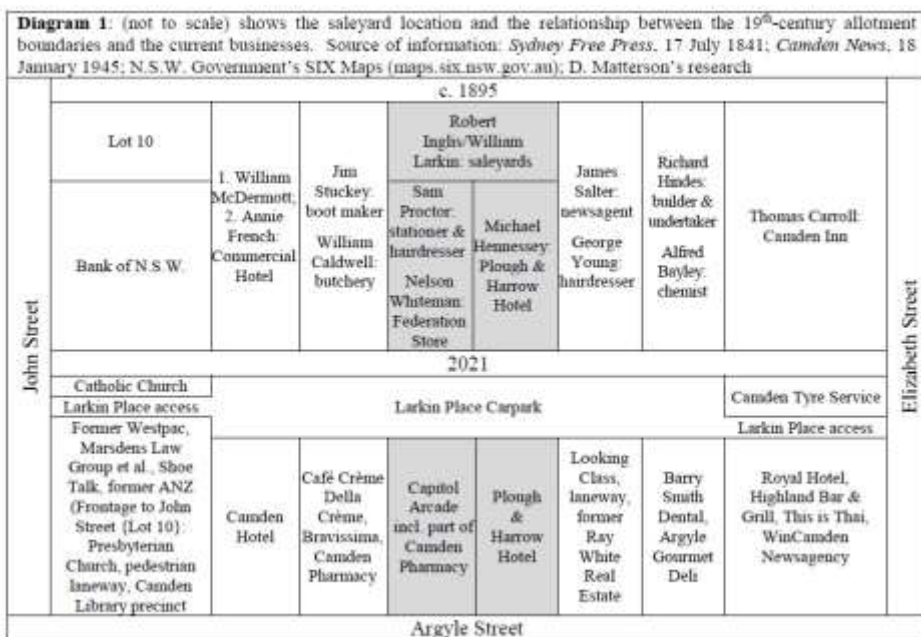
### **A new owner**

In 1904, the pig yards were cemented, the sale yard and its approaches were re-metalled and the commission at cattle auctions was reduced from 5% to 2½% with a ½% charge for advertising. All purchases had to be paid for within a week of the sale on a strictly cash only basis, a change that was thought to be a 'step in the right direction' by the sale attendees.<sup>6</sup> After the death of Robert Inglis in 1904, Captain Larkin purchased the business and continued to trade as R H Inglis. Characteristically, he would consult with the owner of cattle or a horse before allowing the hammer to fall on the sale,

a trait that was well regarded by others.<sup>7</sup> A new produce room was constructed within the grounds of the saleyards, as Captain Larkin intended expanding the business to include the sale of farmer's produce as part of the stock sales each Tuesday. This innovation was well attended as ducks, chickens, potatoes and fruit, all went under the hammer.<sup>8</sup> By this stage, Captain Larkin had the reputation of being able to 'assess the fair market value of any animal' and was regarded as being a 'great judge of cattle and horses; his recognised expertise often resulted in him being appointed as a judge of livestock at agricultural shows throughout NSW.<sup>9</sup> Having established business credibility in his own right, by late 1907, Captain Larkin began trading as 'W Larkin'. In 1911, he included land and housing sales in his stock and produce auctions, and the following year, insisted that buyers remove their stock at the conclusion of an auction, as no animals would be allowed to remain in the pens overnight out of consideration for their welfare, and the wellbeing of nearby residents who could hear the constant bellowing of the animals at night.<sup>10</sup>

## Municipal saleyards

As early as 1901, Alderman Asher raised the prospect in Camden Council of moving the saleyards, but the idea wasn't well supported by other aldermen. Advice on the matter was sought from the Municipal Association, but their report wasn't encouraging as it told the Council the establishment of municipal saleyards required the passing of a Saleyard Act in Parliament. Further discussions were had by the aldermen in 1904 and 1913, but no further action



was taken on the matter until, in 1915, a majority vote in favour of new saleyards resulted in two sites being considered: on the Main Southern Road (now Cawdor Road) near the Barsden Street intersection, or in Edward Street, where 4½ acres could be purchased for £40 per acre from the C T Whiteman Estate. After further debate, the motion to buy land and build the saleyards was passed, but despite the issue being raised several times over the next two years, there were no definitive moves towards construction.<sup>11</sup>

### **David Hayter**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, David Hayter used two horse-drawn vehicles to carry calves and pigs from local farms to the saleyards. If a farm didn't have a loading race, the animals had to be manhandled onto the floor of the vehicle. The calf transport had a floor about a metre from the ground and wooden side battens about 1.2m high. Stock were loaded through a 'gate' in the rear after having a patch of hair removed in a particular pattern with a pair of scissors. This 'branded' the animal; details of the owner, breed of animal, colour and other markings were noted by David and handed to the clerk at the saleyards. If only small numbers of pigs were to be sold, drovers brought the animals to Camden by foot, but if the number exceeded what could be managed on the



**Photo 1: Plough and Harrow Hotel (c. 1910) showing the saleyard access under the R H Inglis sign. [Camden Images]**

road, David transported them in his specially built ‘pig cart’ that was pulled by a draught horse. As pigs were much heavier than calves, they couldn’t be lifted onto the back of the ‘calf’ vehicle. The ‘pig’ cart had the usual wheel diameter (about 1.4m) but had a bent axle that dipped down 90° so the floor of the cart was only about 40cm from the ground, making it easier to lift pigs onto the vehicle. Pigs were ‘branded’ in a similar way to the calves, while the same identifying information was collected and passed onto the saleyard clerk. In the mid 1920s, David bought a truck with pneumatic tyres, an open cabin and no doors, which he used to transport calves and pigs. The main purchasers of Camden’s calves and pigs were Sydney butchers, who transported their newly acquired stock by rail to the Homebush abattoirs.<sup>12</sup>

### **Stock route**

In 1916, Alderman Asher successfully submitted a motion to Camden Council that a stock route around the main street be established; the route was defined as being along all streets in the municipality with the exception of Argyle Street ‘between its junction with Edward and Oxley Streets’. Fencing was erected around the garden plots in Argyle Street between Murray and Oxley Streets, while the railway line from the Cowpasture Bridge to Edward Street was also fenced to prevent animals straying onto the tracks.<sup>13</sup> By 1926, the Council wanted to relocate part of the stock route around the showground, but statutory regulations meant they couldn’t create a route for stock alone; they had to build a road and then direct stock to use that road. The Council approached Fred Doust about resuming a portion of his land from the Main Southern Road to Oxley Street. After several negotiations and input from the Valuer General, Fred sold the required land for £225.<sup>14</sup> The new stock route now passed along Edward, Exeter and Oxley Streets before linking with the new roadway around the western edge of the showground. Stock headed for the saleyards were diverted along Mitchell Street, while animals travelling from Picton went along Barsden Street before joining the Main Southern Road. Anyone foolhardy enough to ignore the new route attracted a fine of £20.<sup>15</sup>

Following a complaint from a member of the public in 1932, a Board of Health officer inspected the saleyards, reporting they were clean and in good condition. Toby Taplin was the ‘yard man’ for the Larkin business and was known for his exceptional work ethic, spending ‘practically the whole day running’ without getting tired.<sup>16</sup> In 1933, Major Larkin sold his auction business to William Inglis & Son, who continued to operate the saleyards from this site while still basing their business in Sydney. However, Major Larkin remained as manager and a salesman for the company until his retirement in 1949.<sup>17</sup>

## New saleyards

By 1929, Major Larkin owned land in Edward Street that may have been purchased by the Inglis company when they bought the Larkin business in 1933. It is likely this land is now occupied by the sale ring and administrative buildings of the current saleyards. Adjacent to this, the Whiteman Estate held 3 allotments of land totalling about 37 acres. One allotment was occupied by a dairy and a cottage, the second allotment was vacant, while the third held a brick kiln, a remnant from the days when this was the site of Camden's brick-works.<sup>18</sup> A portion of this land was owned by William Inglis & Son by 1938. No doubt aware of Camden Council's indecision regarding the municipal saleyards, in 1939 William Inglis & Son told the Council they planned to 'construct modern offices and saleyards in lieu of the present yards'. At the same meeting, the Council received a petition asking for the closure of the saleyards in their present position. The Council resolved to inform the petitioners of the plans of William Inglis & Son. After being a fixture for decades, the saleyards at the rear of the Whiteman buildings and the Plough & Harrow Hotel, were finally closed in October 1940, when the new Inglis yards opened in Edward Street on the site they still occupy today. The new facility had 40 mustering yards and could process 1,500 head of cattle. At the rear, were two paddocks for resting and watering stock, pig and calf



**Photo 2: Whiteman's shops (c. 1935) and the access to the saleyards (centre of photo) [Camden Images]**

stalls, and an area for the delivery or departure of animals, while the whole area was lit with electric lights so ‘yarding’ and loading could take place at night. Adjacent to a red brick administration building, was the open-air, circular sale ring, which had a diameter of 52’ and could hold 300 people.<sup>19</sup>

After the departure of William Inglis & Son in 1940, the former saleyards and auction rooms were dismantled, but it has not been possible to determine just when this occurred. The available records do not mention this land being used for any alternate public use, but instead, it reverted to the private use of the occupants of the hotel and the Whiteman shops. The 1947 Valuer General’s Assessment Books valued the former saleyards as part of the rateable land of each of the aforementioned properties. During World War II, the National Emergency Services encouraged the construction of public air raid trenches or shelters, and while Frank Whiteman (Nelson’s son) had ‘made provision for a shelter so far as he and his staff were concerned’ he offered Council the use of the land at the rear of his shop if they wanted to build a public trench. However, this proposal was rejected as it was private land.<sup>20</sup> John Watson opened a farm machinery and repair business at 85 Argyle Street (now part of the Capitol Arcade) and began trading in 1954. It is thought a portion of the former saleyards may have been used by Mr. Watson to display and store machinery for sale or undergoing repair in what he referred to as his ‘implement yard’.<sup>21</sup>

## **Land resumption**

In 1964, Camden Council successfully resumed land at the rear of the properties from Camden Hotel to Argyle Gourmet Delicatessen (inclusive) to create an off-street parking area on land partly occupied by the saleyards prior to 1940. The resumed land was an irregular shape, unlike today’s almost rectangular configuration and had an area of approximately 0.8 hectare. Vehicular access to the carpark (named Larkin Place) was via a narrow road from Mitchell Street at the rear of the Catholic Church or, alternatively, via a roadway from Elizabeth Street behind the Royal Hotel.<sup>22</sup> In 1966, the Catholic Church successfully applied for the closure of a portion of the Larkin Place roadway at the rear of the church; this, perhaps, resulted in the construction of the current roadway from John Street into the carpark. The Catholic Church successfully applied to close two further portions of Larkin Place at the rear of the church in 1967 and 1979.<sup>23</sup> St. Peter’s Catholic School now occupies this land.

Today Larkin Place occupies approximately 0.7 hectare and is still accessed by two roadways: one from Elizabeth Street and the other from John Street. The modern-day functionality of the carpark hides years of history from an era when cattle, horses, pigs and ducks all left their footprints in the dusty soil and the auctioneer’s voice drew in the crowd. The former saleyard brought farmers and their families into ‘town’ for the day, buying their lunch

at a café or hotel, filling their carts (and later cars) with groceries and perhaps, buying a new shirt, a pair of shoes or material for new curtains. Amongst the hub-bub of 'sale day', friends would meet in the street and exchange news, relive the enjoyment of last week's dance, or bemoan the lack of rain. The saleyards were an integral part Camden's economy and social fabric; if the saleyards did well, the town prospered.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Interview with Bruce Knox & Llewella Davies - John Wrigley, 1982
- <sup>2</sup> *Bowral Free Press & Mittagong, Burrawang & Kangaloon Advocate*, 26 Jan 1884. Recollections of P. Furner, 1963. *Camden News*, 27 Jun 1895; 10 Oct 1895. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Oct 1936; 29 Oct 1936
- <sup>3</sup> *Camden News*, 27 Jun 1895
- <sup>4</sup> *Camden News*, 10 Oct 1895. *The Sun*, 23 Nov 1936. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Oct 1936
- <sup>5</sup> *Camden News*, 26 Nov 1896; 12 Jan 1933
- <sup>6</sup> *Camden News*, 19 May 1904; 1 Sept 1904
- <sup>7</sup> Inglis, R., Speech to St. Paul's Anglican Church Ladies' Guild, 1 Aug 2002. *Camden News*, 22 Dec 1904; 12 Jan 1933
- <sup>8</sup> *Camden News*, 6 Oct 1904; 21 Dec 1905; 4 Jan 1906; 10 May 1906
- <sup>9</sup> *Camden News*, 1 Sept 1904; 9 Jun 1949
- <sup>10</sup> *Camden News*, 5 Apr 1906; 5 Sept 1907; 16 Nov 1911; 4 Jul 1912
- <sup>11</sup> Sidman, G., *The Town of Camden*, p. 49, 52, 62. *Camden News*, 2 May 1901; 16 May 1901; 16 Sept 1915
- <sup>12</sup> Nixon, R., 2002 annotations on a speech given to St. Paul's Anglican Church Ladies' Guild by Dick Inglis, 1.8.2002
- <sup>13</sup> *Camden News*, 30 Mar 1916; 13 Apr 1916
- <sup>14</sup> *Camden News*, 2 Sept 1926; 16 Sept 1926; 30 Sept 1926; 21 Oct 1926; 2 Dec 1926; 20 Jan 1927; 10 Mar 1927; 12 May 1927
- <sup>15</sup> *Camden News*, 6 Oct 1927; 29 Mar 1928
- <sup>16</sup> *Camden News*, 2 Jun 1932. Speech to St. Paul's Anglican Church Ladies' Guild by Dick Inglis, 1 Aug 2002
- <sup>17</sup> *Camden News*, 12 Jan 1933
- <sup>18</sup> 1929 Valuer General's Assessment Book. *Camden News*, 13 Oct 1938.
- <sup>19</sup> *Camden News*, 17 Aug 1939; 30 Nov 1939; 10 Oct 1940; 17 Oct 1940; 5 Dec 1940
- <sup>20</sup> *Camden News*, 26 Feb 1942
- <sup>21</sup> *Camden News*, 1 Jul 1954; 22 Jul 1954; 29 Jul 1954
- <sup>22</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazette*: 12 Feb 1965 [Issue 16], p. 415; 5 Apr 1965, No. 57 [Supplement], p. 1177
- <sup>23</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazette*: 20 May 1966, No. 49, p. 2017; 29 Sept 1967 [No.105] p.3541; 22 Jun 1979, No. 84, p. 3065

# Vale, Peter Taylor

**Ian Ramsay** has written:

I have been notified of the passing of Peter Taylor on 29 August 2021. I am sure that many, if not all of us have seen Peter and possibly never knew his name, for he was simply always referred to as the 'Sally man'.

For a number of years Peter was a regular sight on Argyle Street where he would take up his position with a chair and a small table beside him. He became something of an iconic figure and was well known within the community and was always there to provide an ear to anyone who would stop and talk to him.

Peter had been experiencing ill health for some time but he always put on a brave front to those around him. My dealings with Peter were that Rhonda and I would always stop and have a chat to him whenever we saw him. He was always a pleasant and amicable man.

Argyle Street will not look the same without seeing this familiar Salvation Army man sitting there in his uniform chatting to people.

Stand Down Soldier, Your Duty is Done. RIP



# Otho Vigers Coleman, The Man Behind the Postcard

## Jo O'Brien

In the collection of historic photographs on Camden Images there is an eye-catching range of postcards showing Camden in the 1900s, most carrying the name **O. V. Coleman Camden** prominently on the front. Many may also be familiar with O.V. Coleman's 'Palace of Fashion' outfitter and draper shop, one of the local sites featured on these postcards. But just who was O.V. Coleman?

Otho Vigers Coleman was born in Kempsey c.1860-1 to Albert Manser Coleman and his wife Sidney Jane (nee Emmerton), one of the youngest in a large family. Albert worked as a wheelwright and blacksmith, spending many years in Kempsey before moving to Sydney in the 1870s, to take up coachbuilding. Otho moved with the family to Sydney and married Louisa Ellen Smith of Newton on May 24th, 1883, and they started their family there.

One afternoon in July 1889, the Coleman's home in Frazer St Marrickville,



**O.V. Coleman postcard – Best wishes from Camden. Coleman Postcard Collection (Camden Images)**

was burgled and items of gold jewellery and a silver hunting watch were stolen.[1] It may be one of the reasons that Otho moved his family to Camden that year, to take up the position of manager of the Southern branch of James Harris' tailoring business.

An article about James Harris in 1895 states of Otho Coleman:

'Since coming to Camden Mr. Coleman has made many friends all over the district, and he is now one of the most popular business men in town. He is energetic and pushing, and to his energy and enterprise is due the extensive connection which attaches to Mr Harris' southern branch. The shop is always replete with the latest styles in men's and boy's mercery, and a special feature of the business is the tailor-made clothes which Mr Coleman suits his customers.'[2]

In May of the following year Otho Vigars Coleman and Samuel Ellis nominated for an extraordinary vacancy as Alderman for the Municipal District of Camden.

'Mr. Otto [sic] V. Coleman is a gentleman who has identified himself largely in the detailed workings of those, who, in the past have offered themselves for election, and now the time has arrived when the good offices he has shown to others, should receive that recognition of his ability and valued services. Both gentlemen are well known and highly esteemed, and as good and faithful citizens the municipality will be enhanced by the service of either elected. The election will be a keen one, and the supporters of Mr. Coleman are working strenuously to secure his election. The electors — the best judges — will decide the point at issue. Mr. Coleman we might state is greatly in favour of a direct water supply, for Camden, and to consummate this end will receive a large measure of support from those favourable to such an essential feature to the well being and health of the municipality.'[3]

O.V Coleman won the 1896 election and, being in favour of a direct water supply for Camden, he was part of a deputation to the Water Board Sydney in February 1897, negotiating for the supply. In 1899 the water supply was finally turned on in Camden.[4] Otho was re-elected as Alderman in February 1899, but surprisingly resigned at the January 1900 council meeting along with Ald. J.R. Armitage. [5]

Meanwhile, in May 1897, Otho Coleman opened up his own outfitting and gentleman's business in Camden, after James Harris' business changed hands. He set up his shop in the 'premises lately occupied by Mr Cronshaw', and the *Camden News* wished 'Mr. Coleman every success, which his urban-

# **PALACE of FASHION!**

## **Alteration to Premises.**

On account of Business increasing and scarcity of room, MY LANDLORD has decided to ALTER THE PREMISES, placing me in a position second to none. Next week I will make my first display of 'XMAS NOVELTIES, If you are studying economy call and see my new prices. Everything up to date. Men's and Boy's Clothing. Hats of every description. Shirts in variety. Latest in Neckwear. Cheap Dust Rugs. Prints unequalled in value. Largest stock of Men's, Women's and Children's Boots and Shoes in town. A great assortment of Toys and Xmas Cards.



**O. V. COLEMAN,**

**RECORD HOUSE, CAMDEN.**

### **Advertising for OV Coleman - *Camden News* 2 December 1897.**

ity and courtesy warrants'[6]. Advertisements for O.V. Coleman's business became prominent in the *Camden News*. The advertisement above from December 1897 declares that business was already going well, and that the premises was being altered to provide more room for an increasing range of stock.[7]

A pre-Christmas article on Camden shops in 1900 – titled O.V. Coleman states:

"The Palace of Fashion" and well might Mr. Coleman's emporium be so termed, the palace for cheapness may also be added for the prices marked are surprisingly low. Dolls by the hundreds, toys by the crate, and for children's elders their requirements have not been neglected for the stock is indeed a large one, and what is more of superior quality. A pleasurable feature of Mr Coleman's stock is that every line of goods can be seen at a glance on entering the shop. What more is needed. Call and see for yourself; Coleman's efforts to suit the tastes of all must be appreciated. Mr Coleman makes a specialty of men's clothing ready made or to fit.'[8]

Sadly, only a few weeks after that Christmas, the Coleman's eldest son Bertie Manser Coleman tragically died at the age of eleven. The *Camden News* reported that:

'The youth about three weeks ago was stung by a fly just above the eyebrow, subsequently medical attention was called and every care taken, more serious symptoms ensued, death unfortunately occurred despite the care. The cause of death was a poisoned brain. The greatest sympathy is locally expressed for the bereaved parents. The funeral took place on Monday afternoon and was very largely attended despite the inclement weather.'[9]

The 'impressive funeral ceremony' was held at the old Cawdor church, attended by his Sunday School boys, with many wreaths and letters from district residents expressing their deepest sympathy.

In 1902 O.V. Coleman's father, Albert Manser Coleman, also died, aged 84. His obituary stating that he was a native of Kent, who came to New South Wales 64 years ago, and that he 'took a great interest in public matters' while in Kempsey. Clearly Otho followed in his footsteps with his involvement in council and other local matters. O.V. Coleman also became a local magistrate in March 1904.[10]

O.V. Coleman's success in business continued, as frequent advertisements and reports in the *Camden News* attest. He appeared to be a bold, enterprising, and innovative businessman. In 1901 he was the first to introduce acetylene gas lighting in his shop as the following article describes:

'On Tuesday evening the residents saw the results of the first acetylene installation in Camden, and it certainly proved successful. Mr O V. Coleman, draper, Argyle-street, taking the initiative by lighting his premises. The effect was brilliant, the inside of the store was also lighted, a single light over each counter showed the colours of all articles in their tints, and the powerful lights outside displayed the windows perfectly. Mr. Oakman personally superintended the lighting of Mr. Coleman's establishment. The plant, Mr Oakman stated, can be attended to without the possibility of mistake or accident, and that the cost is not more than with the use of wick lamps, while all risks of lamp breakages of chimneys, and dangers are avoided. Certainly Mr Coleman deserves great credit for making the start, and we see no reason that he will ever regret the change. He extends a cordial invitation to everybody to inspect the plant every Saturday evening.'[11]

By 1907 Mr. Coleman found he was 'cramped up for space, his business hav-



**Argyle Street, Camden (Note the pre 1907 O.V. Coleman shop on the south side of Argyle St near Hill St - now the location of Billy the Squid, 66-68 Argyle St) (Camden Images)**

ing grown greatly of late years', and so moved his Palace of Fashion business across the road to 'the space once occupied by the Old Post-office and a chemist shop, recently destroyed by fire', where 'two fine brick shops with residences attached were being erected', now the location of Barry Smith Dental at 61 Argyle Street. The article in the *Camden News* goes on to say:

'Being a good business man, straight and honorable in his dealings, Mr Coleman has managed to retain his connection from the start, besides adding to it. By selling a good article at a reasonable price, and studying the interests of his customers he cannot fail to go on in the road of success.'

O.V. Coleman did appear to like to fill his shop with goods, and he was fined several times for having goods on the footpath over the years, even in his new premises in 1910, 'hanging goods from the ceiling and on the posts' for which he was fined 10s and 6s costs.

*Camden News* 30 May 1907

**YOU'LL GET IT BEST**  
AT  
**COLEMAN'S.**

---

**EVERYTHING for Men & Boys!**  
Men's Knee Length Made Suits in Serge, Tweed, or Fancy Worsted.  
Crispot or Tennis Trousers, Light summer Coats, Holiday Socks & Trousers, Fancy summer Vests, Men's cool shirts and Under-clothing. Pyjama Suits.

**BOYS' AND YOUTHS' SAC SUITS!**  
INCREDIBLE LIGHTWEIGHT. BANGOR BOYS IN EVERY LAMBS WOOL OR  
MADE AND OUTFIT.

**REAL PANAMA HATS.**  
SHED AND SUNSTAYING HATS. SHIRAZ STYLE.

**GOOD BOOTS** THE BEST QUALITY AT THE LOWEST PRICE.  
**TOYS AND FANCY GOODS.**  
SPECIAL CARDS, JEWELLERY, CLOCKS, TOY CARS, AND ALL THE LATEST NOVELTIES.  
SPECIAL CREDIT FOR CASH ON DELIVERY. 10% OFF ON CASH PAYMENT. 10% OFF ON CASH PAYMENT. 10% OFF ON CASH PAYMENT.

Large Stock of Bags, Trunks, Baskets, &c

Open for Business **TUESDAY**, 'TODAY' Eve,  
until 10 p.m.

**O. V. COLEMAN'S,**  
New **PALACE of FASHION.**  
**CAMDEN**



And the prominent advertisements continued regularly in the *Camden News* advertising the wide array of goods that were available in the New Palace of Fashion.[13, 14]

In the mid-1900s O.V. Coleman advertised 'comic and view post-cards'[15] and 'Thousands of Post-cards'[16] for sale, and in December 1907 - 'Xmas cards, Post cards – heaps to choose from at lowest prices.'[17] It was around this time that he commissioned the well-known series of postcards from Crown Studios, Sydney. It is not known who took the photographs, but they include many well-known Camden landmarks such as churches, banks, prominent residences, and local scenes. The numbered series have

the distinctive border with the name of the view and O.V. Coleman, Camden, and appear to be dated 1908. Included in the collection is a picture of Otho's new shop at 59-61 Argyle Street, the same photograph was used as numbered postcard No. 112.

There are a number of photographs taken by Otho himself in the collection on Camden Images, including river scenes. His youngest son Claude Elliott Coleman (b.1900) continued his father's interest in photography, some of his photographs also feature on Camden Images, and there are references to his work at local shows: at the Autumn Flower Show in 1914 Master Claude Coleman made 7s 11d with his 'moving pictures'; and in 1918 Mr. Claude Coleman applied for the sole right of the photographic stand at the coming Camden Show.

***Camden News* 12 December 1907**





**Coleman Family portrait. c.1911-12 Tesla Studios, Q.V. Markets, Sydney. Image no. 69495 From left to right - Louisa Ellen Coleman, Arthur Elliott Peat, Louisa Gertrude Sydney Peat, Otho Vigars Coleman (contributed by Peat family) (Camden Images)**

A family portrait shows Otho and Louisa Coleman with their daughter Louisa and grandson Arthur Elliott Peat in either 1911 or 1912.

At Gertie Coleman's wedding to W. Peat in 1908 the bride was given away by her father,[18] however, by the time of daughter Stella May's wedding to George New in January 1914, 'the bride was given away by her eldest brother, Mr. Roy Coleman, through the absence of her father owing to ill-health'. [19] Otho was also absent at daughter Daisy's wedding to Matthew Porter in April 1914, as the bride was again given away her eldest brother.[20]

Although the name O.V. Coleman is frequently found in advertising for his shop, there are no further references to Otho attending any events.

Two of the Colemans' sons served in WWI and Mr O.V. Coleman received news that Roy and Leslie were both wounded in France a few weeks apart in 1917.[21] Thankfully both returned safely and received presentations at the



Peace Celebrations held in Camden in 1919.[22]

Sadly, daughter Stella May New died in April 1922 leaving behind her husband and four young sons. An obituary published at the time demonstrates that she followed in her father's footsteps :

‘As a young woman she gained the esteem of the whole community by her generous and kindly disposition as a business woman and her intimate association with the work of the Sunday School and Methodist Church, where her keen interest and untiring energy were invaluable’.[23]

O.V. Coleman's 'Palace of Fashion' shop finally closed in 1922. A notice on October 31 for 'the assigned estate of Otho Vigars Coleman' invites tenders for 'Stock in Trade and Plant' including Drapery and Men's Clothing as listed by the Trustees' Representative.[24] There is no indication however that this was due to a bankruptcy. This was followed by an 'Important sale of superior household furniture and effects' at 'Mr. O. V. Coleman's residence' which was advertised by W. Larkin for 4 November 1922:

‘THE WHOLE of the first class Furnishings of this 2 storied dwelling. Comprising: — Bedroom suites, double and three-quarter and single, bedsteads and bedding, stretchers, cedar chest of drawers, overmantle, sideboard, marble top washstands, palm stands, arm chairs, Austrian chairs, deck chairs, 3 dining tables, dressing tables, kitchen dresser, writing desk, all kitchen uten-



sils, including saucepans, pots, pans, boiler, kettles, lot crockery and glass-ware, ornaments, linoleums, mats, door slips, mangle, towel horse and numerous sundries. SPECIAL ATTENTION is drawn to this sale as the Furniture is a really first class lot, and in splendid order'.[25]"

The shop at 61 Argyle street was occupied by James Pinkerton, tailor in December 1922.[26]





Otho Vigers Coleman died on 7 December 1928, at his residence 1 Carlton St., Manly, at the age of 67 years. An obituary in the *Camden News* states he was an old resident of Camden, for many years carrying on a Tailoring and Mercery business, at one time an alderman and connected with many local institutions. He was buried at Cawdor, with the Camden Masonic brethren assembling at the graveside.[27]

It is not stated in the available articles why Otho closed his business, why he moved to Manly, or what his cause of death was – further research may provide some answers. However there is a clue in this help wanted ad from 6 September 1922:

‘WANTED, strong, middle-aged, kind Woman, help look after para-





**Coleman grave at Cawdor Uniting Church cemetery (Find a Grave website)**

lysed man, good home, wages 20/. Apply 1 Carlton Street Manly , ‘Phone 1236.’[28]

Otho Vigars Coleman, the ‘Palace of Fashion’ and the iconic postcards, are an important part of Camden’s history. His enterprise, innovation, and contributions to Camden, as well as glimpses of the man that he was, are remembered through the stories recorded in the local paper, *The Camden News*, as well as the photographs and the O.V. Coleman postcards held by Camden Historical Society, and available to view on Camden Images.

### **Author’s note**

The OV Coleman postcards in this article are from the Camden Historical Society Collection on Camden Images.

The research for this story has of necessity utilised online resources, primarily using the NLA website Trove, Camden Images, and Ancestry. It is amazing how someone from the past can come to life through pictures and newspaper articles!

My thanks to Dianne Matterson for her help locating O.V. Coleman's Argyle Street businesses, and to John Wrigley for his article in *The District Reporter* on 5 December 2016, "'The 'Palace of Fashion' and postcards'.

Thank you also to Coleman descendant Mrs Miriam Bilbey for collecting and donating many of the postcards to Camden Museum.

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# **When The Old Schoolhouse Was New Bringelly Public School**

## **David Adams**

For a quarter of a century, from 1905, there were always one or more members of the Adams family attending Bringelly Public School.

The nine of us - seven girls and two boys - in our turn walked the 2½ miles (five miles there and back) five days a week, from the bottom end of Derwent Road.

Our eldest, my sister Helen, was first, and she was kept back by my mother until she was eight, when her younger sister was thought old enough to keep her company on this long and lonely walk. They would go off together carrying their lunches and come home eight or nine hours later bringing the mail and newspapers from the post-office.

No public transport existed then, and the community of small farmers were too busy at their work to harness-up horses twice daily and drive to and from school. Two or three pupils rode or drove their own horses and 'parked' them in the enclosure between the 'weather-shed' and Greendale Road.

For our part of Bringelly came the Petiths (like ours, a large family), the Powells, Kerslakes, Matthews and Browns, with Jack Nobbs and George Little joining us from Mersey Road and Albert Lord from Badgery Creek Road. Earlier there had been Harvey Copley and the Condons, Hays and Hendersons. From other parts of Bringelly in my time came grandchildren of James and Emma Coggins, then the oldest living residents. Also, among other schoolfellows there were Mervyn and Linda Anschau (accomplished horse-riders from Maryland), the McIntoshes from the post-office, the Aulds, Leila Byrne, Bill Bird, Ena Duncan, Dulcie Barnard, Ernie Wheeler, the Lloyds, Simpsons and Teasdales.

When I began school in 1915 ( I was sixth starter in our family) there were few motor-cars in the district. Though our teacher had a T-model Ford, I never saw him drive it. But as George Petith and I were called on from time to time to repair its punctured tyres, it must have had outings.

On the roads there would be timber-cutters with horse-drawn tip-drays loaded with firewood, rabbit-trappers with their catches hanging beneath their sulkie, farmers in spring-carts taking their produce to Narellan, sometimes a drover



### **Bringelly Public School Headmaster's residence (L Stratton 2021)**

on horseback with stockwhip over his shoulder, the mail-coach, drawn by two horses and plying between Bringelly post-office and Liverpool, and occasionally noisy motor-vehicles scattering the road-metal as they startled plodding horses in their passing. They left a novel and exciting smell of 'benzine' behind them.

Although the Bringelly schoolhouse, built in 1897, was only 18 years old when I first attended, to my seven year-old mind it already seemed to belong to antiquity. The illusion was enhanced by the musty odour of modelling-clay and eraser rubbings that pervaded the schoolroom. It never seemed to disperse. It was quite different from the fresh air that abounded elsewhere in Bringelly. On frosty or windy winter mornings, going to school, I sometimes feared I would die of fresh air.

There were usually about 30 pupils in the school then. We had very little equipment. Apart from blackboards and slates (and screechy slate-pencils!), I remember two or three wall-maps, a barometer, thermometer, a cloud-identification chart, some specimens, an abacus, a cane (used occasionally)



**Bringelly Public  
School Medallion  
Celebrating 140  
Years of Public  
Education  
(L Stratton 2021)**

and a cupboard which housed supplementary readers as well as an old Bacon Atlas, some other books, copies of the 'School Magazine' and various class and school records. There was also a long pole with a brass hook on the end of it for opening and closing the top windows and sometimes for shifting the wall-maps.

Outside, near the western buttresses, there was a level concrete slab with a place for a pole in the middle (for measuring daily movements in the sun's shadow at noon) and various instructive markings around about. We also had a rain-gauge, and kept weather records.

The children were expected to maintain the garden. The floral part of it was between the schoolhouse and the main road, but no matter how carefully we cultivated, with no water-supply the fate of the garden depended on the weather, and the only flowers that could really be relied on were from the plumbago bushes.

In the corner of the school ground nearest the crossroads efforts were made to grow vegetables. But besides droughts we had another problem. I used to find old bricks and foundation materials wherever I dug, as well as clinkers and cinders. The clinkers etc, could have come at some period from the blacksmith's forge on the other (south-western) corner of the crossroads (in my time conducted by Bill Coggins), and were seemingly put on the grounds to serve as a kind of paving for wet weather.

On the parish maps, Bringelly school ground has the appearance of having been sliced off from Kelvin (granted to Thomas Laycock in 1818, and then called Cottage Vale) when the Northern Road was put through at a much later time than the Bringelly Road between Liverpool and Greendale, and the bricks may have been the remains of an old inn, a former schoolhouse or habitation. On the other hand they could have been waste left behind by builders of the schoolhouse in 1897. I have often wondered.

What we called the 'weather-shed' was really the 'wet-weather shed'. It had, as I remember, a store-room at the eastern end (nearest the schoolhouse), and a shed for housing a car or buggy at the other. In between was a large area, completely open on the Greendale Road side, with a seat running round the walls. It had an earth floor, and was built of upright slabs, with a window-sized opening in the back wall, used as a quick entrance and exit by the boys.

There was a large, rough carpenter's bench in the main shed, used when we were doing 'manual work' other than gardening. On the open side, up a stout pole, hung the school bell.

Around the grounds were three or four pepper-trees and a line of silky oaks.

Although one School-Inspector Mr G. T. Cotterill, recorded that I 'sang with good spirit, but out of tune' (his findings has never been disputed). I seem to remember our singing sessions as clearly as anything else.

We had 'Ring the Bell, Watchman', which I later found to have the same tune as 'Click Go the Shears'; 'Men of Harlech'; 'Advance Australia Fair'; 'Redwing', and the 'Canadian Boat Song'. In the boat-song there is a chorus:

Row, brothers, row, the stream runs fast,  
The rapids are near, and the daylight's past.

But in the Bringelly version, the last line became 'The rabbits are near', etc.

In another (Australian) song favoured by our teacher, there is a chorus starting 'Come with me, merry and free', and finishing:



**Bringelly Public School.  
This is the first classroom  
building at the school  
built in 1897.  
(L Stratton 2021)**

Grief and care, come if you dare,  
We will be happy today!

It was sometime before I discovered that the true words were *not* 'Reef and tear, come if you dare' etc.

Learning poetry, most of us started off with 'Up in the airy mountain, down the rushy glen', which behind the teacher's back became 'Up the hairy mountain, down the other side'. But favourites among beginners were Henry Lawson's rather mournful 'Harry Dale the Drover' and 'Banjo' Paterson's happier 'Clancy of the Overflow'.

In the higher classes we had Gray's 'Elegy' and Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life' and 'Children's Hour' among standard recitations. The girls who rode horses also favoured Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott' - anyway, up to where 'Tirra lirra', by the river sang 'Sir Lancelot'.

But probably the most popular was a comparative newcomer then, Dorothea Mackellar's 'Love of Country'. It was natural also that at this time - I started

school in the year of the Anzac landing - we should have been interested in many poems inspired by the First World War published in the Education Department's 'School Magazine'.

For mothers and their daughters in Bringelly life then was difficult. Up to the time I left in 1923, there was no electricity (think of it!), no reliable water-supply, no public transport, and of course, no radio or television. Few people had telephones, and medical and dental attention was hard to arrange. For many visits to Sydney were rare, and most shopping, except for food and groceries, was done by mail-order. Side-roads became bogs after long rains.

Boys could adapt themselves to the conditions better. There was hunting, sometimes shooting (no fishing unless you fancied tortoises and eels or an occasional carp), and horses to work and play with. But there was no cricket, football or tennis, even at school. So the urge always was to leave school as soon as practicable and move to the city.

During the whole of my eight years at Bringelly school (except for three months, when a relieving teacher was in charge) I had the good fortune to be taught by Mr. Burton Edward Sampson. He was a man with a wide breadth of general knowledge as well as academic and literary interests. Although reserved, preoccupied and rather conservative in his tastes, he was essentially Australian. He was proud of his horse Yorkie, which had good blood-lines. Mr Sampson's forebears were among the founders of Orange, N.S.W., and he had spent his earlier years as a teacher around Tamworth and Gunnedah.

He and Mrs Sampson, a kind motherly, woman who enjoyed giving the girls their chatty sewing lessons, lived in the bridge cottage on the northern side of the school house. They had six children, but the eldest was killed at Gallipoli. The children were all older than I and had mostly left Bringelly when I began school.

Not long after I finished school, Mr Sampson retired to an orchard at Hilltop, on the southern highlands, but later built himself a home at Telopea, near Dundas, where he died, aged over ninety. He became my friend as well as being my tutor.

The school library was small, and I think it was supplemented by some of the Sampson family's own books. But it was sadly inadequate for children with inquiring minds. Still, it included 'Ivanhoe', 'Masterman Ready', 'Midshipman Easy', 'The Coral Island', 'The Pathfinder', a couple of tales by Maine Reid, and 'We of the Never-Never'. The Sampson lent me 'Lorna Doone', I remember, which enchanted me; but I don't think I ever finished

any of the Bulwer Lytton's books - 'The Last Days of Pompeii', 'The Last of the Barons', 'Rienzi' etc. And 'Eric', or 'Little by Little', didn't grip me. Other unfinished reading were those Sunday-school prizes with exciting cover-pictures but sad and moralistic stories inside.

I stayed on at Bringelly until I was 15, studying accountancy by correspondence. I completed these studies after I left for Sydney in 1923, doing office-work at the same time. Almost by chance, four years later, I joined the editorial staff of 'The Bulletin', and worked in the old building that had been haunted by 'Harry Dale's' creator, Henry Lawson, during his most productive working years. 'Banjo' Paterson was still alive, but was no longer a contributor. E.J. Brady, balladist of the sea and ships, then in his sixties, kept in touch from Mallacoota Inlet. Old Roderic Quinn still came to the office when he had something for us, as did scores of new poets and storytellers. I worked among them for 33 years, the last 13 as Editor.

Every year I have revisited Bringelly, sometimes frequently. It's ancient landscape has a soft, clear and timeless beauty that is a complete contrast to the dramatic scenery of the Sydney coastline and the Blue Mountains. It was aptly named Bringelly before Governor Macquarie toured the district in 1810. It is a Welsh name, in Wales pronounced 'Bringeh-ly', meaning 'hill in the meadow' or 'meadow hill'. And around it meanders the casuarina-lined South Creek, called by the Aborigines 'Wianamatta', as it has meandered - according to the late Professor Griffith Taylor - for several million years.

### **Note**

This article is a reprint from Anniversary Committee, *Bringelly Public School, A record of the first 100 years of Bringelly's public education*. Committee, Bringelly, 2018.

# Johnson Plaques

## Julie Wrigley

The late Janice Johnson, a former secretary of the Camden Historical Society, died in 2017 and left money for the Society to place cast bronze plaques on six gravesites in the historic cemetery of the St John's Anglican Church. Janice was a local historian, well known for her tours of the St John's Cemetery. Janice saw these graves as significant and wanted their inscriptions preserved and known.

In July 2020, approval was gained from the **Anglican Church Property Trust**, with the help of Ross Newport and the other St John's wardens. In August 2020, approval to proceed was received from the **Heritage Council of NSW**. In October 2020, approval was gained from **Camden Council**.

Early in 2021 the granite arrived from overseas and the plaques were attached to the grey granite slopers. The plaques were installed at St John's on 5 February 2021, by Peter Raksts, Heritage Monumental Masons. The Historical Society was pleased to complete the task as Janice had wished.

These are the stories about the six plaques which Janice Johnson wanted placed at St John's cemetery. She told the stories on her cemetery tours. I have shortened some entries. They come from *If Gravestones Could Talk* (2010) or the unpublished version Janice revised in (2017), which the Society hopes to reprint.



**St John's Church and Cemetery at Camden where the Johnson Bequest funded a number of plaques on grave sites. (I Willis, 2021)**

## Sophia Cox nee Gumbleton [1815 – 1844]

Thomas Cox from Farnham, Dorset, England, arrived in Sydney on the Brothers on 8 April 1837 accompanied by his wife Sophia Gumbleton[1] ,

and one year old son John. Sophia, born 1815 in Dorset, was the daughter of Samuel Gumbleton and Elizabeth Golding. Thomas Cox had been recruited as a bounty immigrant by the Rev. John West, rector of Chettle and Farnham, Dorset, to work for James and William Macarthur at Camden Park as a butler and Sophia as a house servant, £12 p.a. Thomas and Sophia had a second child, a daughter, Martha.

Sophia died on 24th October 1844 (aged 29) at Bransby's Cottage[2], Mitchell Street, Camden, and was buried at the new cemetery at St. John's Camden in Section E082. Her gravestone, believed to be the first in the cemetery[3], often causes confusion as it bears the inscription "In memory of SOPHIA GUMBLETON" with the comment "wife of Thomas Cox[4]" in smaller letters.

‘Cox E082 In memory of SOPHIA GUMBLETON wife of Thomas Cox who died 29 Oct 1844 aged 29 years "Weep not dear friends Camden's no more, I am not lost but gone before, and in good time I hope to see, my dearest friends in heaven with me"‘.

## Notes

1. The name Gumbleton originated in a village in Wiltshire and the family tree dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The headstone seems to reflect the pride in the name.
2. Thomas Cox (born about 1815) purchased Lot 2 Section 9 in Mitchell Street from Thomas Kean about 1840 and built a four-room brick cottage on the site soon after he purchased the land. The land was sold to Charles Kemp in 1846, soon after Thomas made his final payment. Charles Kemp leased the property to Dr George Bransby. 'Bransby's Cottage' by Colin and Agnes Mills. *Camden History*. March 2003, Volume 1, Number 5.
3. Sophia Cox was buried in 1844 but because of delays St John's Church was not completed and consecrated until 1849.
4. Thomas Cox, late of Camden, died on 9 February 1849, aged 34. *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 Feb 1849.

## John Lakeman [1811 – 1869]

One settler who was to have an impact on Camden was John Lakeman who was born in Westminster, London on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1811. Lakeman who had been trained as a domestic servant married Catherine Elizabeth Gibbs at St. George the Martyr, Southwark, Surrey on 26 February 1838. According to Lakeman's death certificate they arrived in New South Wales in January 1839.

John had been working as a waiter at the Red Cow in Parramatta until 1843 [1] when he took over from Joseph Goodluck as the innkeeper at the Camden Inn[2] at the corner of Argyle and Elizabeth Streets. John was a good landlord, unlike Joseph Goodluck, and the hotel prospered under his management,



**Plaques for John Lakeman and Hannah Lakeman funded by Janice Johnson bequest at St John's Church cemetery Camden (I Willis, 2021)**

so by 1846 he was able to purchase the property outright.

Lakeman also purchased other property in Argyle and Mitchell Streets and was regarded as a respected and prosperous landlord, but credit must be given to his wife Catherine who was a meticulous bookkeeper. He was also landlord of the slaughterhouse and the local butcher; and widely popular in the town. In July 1855 his world was to come crashing down around him, when he was indicted for having 'violated the person of one Mary Ann Woods'.<sup>[3]</sup>

Mary Ann Woods was the wife of Joseph Woods; the couple being bonded servants of Lakeman. The Woods had arrived as bounty immigrants in May 1855 on *HMS Victory* and had been taken by Lakeman to Camden. Joseph attended to the outdoor work, and Mary Ann was engaged to do the work of a general servant.

Mary Ann told the court that on the Sunday her mistress had gone to church and she was making the beds when Lakeman had come into the room and

raped her. When her husband returned home after completing his duties she told him what had occurred and requested that Lakeman be punished. Joseph told his wife he would bring the matter before a magistrate on the following day.

Joseph testified at Lakeman's trial that he had been unable to reach to the residence of the magistrate, John Oxley, after this incident. Mary Ann made no complaint to Mrs. Lakeman or in fact to anyone else until after the following Thursday when Mrs. Lakeman had gone to Sydney and Mary Ann was again alone in the house with her employer, and claimed he had raped her again. She at once told her husband. They remained in the house that night, but on the following day had Lakeman charged with both acts of violence.

On 7th August 1855 he was tried in the Supreme Court on the charge of rape [4]. His Honour told the jury, that in order to find Lakeman guilty they must be convinced, not only that Mary Ann had been violated against her will, but that Lakeman was aware of this fact. Lakeman's guilt must be established to the exclusion of all reasonable doubt. The jury, after having deliberated for 45 minutes found Lakeman guilty, but recommended mercy, on account of his long residence in the colony, and generally good conduct. As rape was a capital offence the judge sentenced Lakeman to death by hanging. In passing the death sentence the judge said that he wholly concurred with the verdict, and dwelt briefly upon the clearness of the proof. Lakeman appeared perfectly calm while the sentence was being passed.

Fortunately for Lakeman, James Macarthur who had been the presiding magistrate when he was arraigned in Camden became concerned as new evidence began to emerge. Macarthur became convinced the Woods had actually set a trap for Lakeman in order to be freed from their obligation to work for him until their passage had been paid. Once Lakeman had been found guilty they were freed from their bounty obligations. When this became general knowledge a number of people changed their minds about Lakeman's guilt and signed a petition to the Governor asking for his pardon and release. Due to public pressure Lakeman's sentence was remitted to 10 years hard labour and he was interred on Cockatoo Island in the middle of Sydney Harbour.

Catherine Lakeman continued writing to the authorities asking for a pardon. Luckily, this fell into friendly hands. The Attorney General was a close political friend of James Macarthur. Lakeman's case was quickly referred to the judge who had presided at the trial, but he refused to change his decision. The matter was then referred to Cabinet, and in January 1857 Lakeman received a pardon.

Lakeman returned to Camden and led an uneventful life until May 1869 when Camden was experiencing a flood. On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May Constable Thomas Byrne and Constable Beck launched the police boat to collect the midday mail, the flood boat having been damaged. On their return one of the passengers was John Lakeman. The boat had nearly reached the Camden side when it struck a fence, which broke under the strain. The rowers succeeded in freeing the boat and in heading her round, before the current caught them. With the keel facing downstream the boat overturned and all the parties were thrown out.

Constable Thomas Byrne, who was heavily clothed with a cape fastened round his neck, sank at once. Constable Beck swam to a tree, and was rescued. Lakeman managed to grasp one of the oars and was carried downstream, but was next seen clinging to a tree about 200 yards (182.9 metres) lower down, and about 200 yards (182.9 metres) from land. He appeared to have good footing on a branch, and was about breast-high in the water. Charles Augustus Thompson volunteered to carry a rope out to him, but, just as he reached him the violence of the current wrenched it out of his hand. Thompson managed to get to a tree and rested, but was so weak from exertion and cold that he had to be assisted back by a young man named James Collins who had swum over to help him.

Some attempts were made to launch rafts from a point higher up stream, but the rows of willow trees and fences rendered it impossible to float anything in the right direction. The accident had happened in about the worst possible place. Lakeman had been in the water about an hour and a half, and his rescuers commented that he was behaving with surprising courage, quietly watching the proceedings.

Collins made some noble attempts to reach him by swimming out on horse-back, but failed. Thomas Cross, assisted by Thomas Death, then succeeded in swimming over with a rope. By this time Lakeman could scarcely speak, but fastened the rope to his body and urged Death to go back and get the people to haul him across. He afterwards repeatedly nodded his head as a sign for them to pull. The position between Lakeman and his rescuers made it necessary to pull him upwards at angles against the stream in an endeavour to avoid a clump of trees about half way over. By this time Lakeman was exhausted and unable to assist. When he was near to safety the river swung him round and the rope snagged against one of the trees. The rope parted and Lakeman sank from sight. His body was found the next day, after the flood had subsided, and he is buried in the family plot in Section A102.

[It is believed that wife, Catherine Lakeman, and John Lakeman Jnr. are both

buried in the plot.]

Lakeman                      A102                      Sacred to the memory of JOHN LAKEMAN born September 3rd, 1811 drowned May 8th, 1869

## Notes

1. Alan Atkinson, *Camden*
2. Camden Inn was later known as the Royal Hotel; it was demolished in the 1970s and replaced by the Merino Tavern.
3. "Law – Central Criminal Court Tuesday Before Mr. Justice Dickinson – Rape" *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 August 1855.
4. "Law – Central Criminal Court Tuesday Before Mr. Justice Dickinson – Rape" *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 August 1855.

## Hannah Lakeman [1841 – 1845]

A103                      In memory of HANNAH LAKEMAN born September 4th, 1841 died May 23rd, 1845

Hannah was the daughter of John and Catherine Lakeman. Alan Atkinson's *Camden Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales* (2008) adds some details:

‘Behind Lakeman was his wife Catherine, once his fellow servant, obedient, faithful, long-suffering, and yet a force in her own right. She was a meticulous bookkeeper, and James Macarthur maintained that it was her ‘great exertions which made the inn so profitable’. Like her husband she was of labouring stock, and their own house[1] proved their small pretensions, sitting-room, kitchen and servants’ room. Mrs Lakeman somehow overlaid her husband’s roughness with a sober genteel charm, and thereby gave his power a decent gloss[2]. She bore him two children, and in 1845 the lost the first [Hannah] while pregnant with the second [John][3].’

## Notes

1. The house was a cottage on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Argyle Street, across the road from the Inn.
2. James Macarthur’s declaration, 29 August 1855. J. Macarthur to Michael Fitzpatrick, 2 September 1855, and map showing Lakeman’s house [1855], and other papers, *NSW/SA* 4/3339. The extraordinary meticulous detail on the family birth and death certificates must have come from Mrs Lakeman.
3. John Lakeman Junior, Obituary *Camden News* 20 October 1921, page 5.

## **James Stewart [1847 - 1872]**

One tragedy that occurred in Camden was to shock not only the town but Sydney as well. The gravestone on the grave of James Stewart points us to the story.

James Stewart had recently been employed at Camden Park as a clerk/storekeeper. He was the son of a squatter, James Stewart Snr. and Ann, from Rolland's Plains near Port Macquarie and was born about 1847. Apart from the story of his violent and tragic death, history does not have much to relate about this young gentleman, and the weathered gravestone located in Section B017 is now difficult to read, but the words "struck down by the hand of a maniac" are a tantalizing clue to the story.



**James Stewart 1847-1872  
(Wikitree)**

As is often the case, more is known about the murderer than the victim, particularly when the murderer was a well-known local. The other person involved in the tragedy was Robert Boyd, the second son of Richard Boyd and Sarah Higgins born at Camden Park on 4 February 1826. At an early age he went to work with his father in the stables at the Home Farm[1] and earned the respect of William and James Macarthur for his treatment of the horses. On 24 February 1848 he married Augusta Maria Sheather who was with child at the time of the marriage. Their daughter Emily was born 14 days later.

Augusta Maria Sheather, the daughter of James Sheather and Mary Milham, was born in Beckley, Sussex, England on 30th March 1827. The Sheather family arrived in Sydney 10 March 1839 on the Royal George as bounty immigrants under contract to James and William Macarthur.

Shortly after their marriage Boyd and Augusta went to Nangus Station, the Macarthurs' property located on the Murrumbidgee River near Gundagai, where he was in charge of the Macarthurs' horses. The family stayed at Nangus Station until 1854 when the property was sold, and then returned to Camden Park where Boyd continued to work as a groom, and above his wages earned money for horse breaking. For many years he was held in great re-

spect and regarded as an honest man. He played cricket for a local team and was reported as having saved a child from drowning in the river. During the floods of August 1857 he crossed the river in order to get the Sydney mail. By 1860 Boyd was known to be suffering from violent bouts of temper and irritations and was attending a doctor for treatment. The behaviour was put down to Boyd having suffered a few kicks to the head over the years whilst breaking in horses.

Soon after the death of their daughter Florence from Scarlet Fever, Augusta suffered a stroke and was bedridden and unable to speak. Boyd continued to work at the Home Farm [Belgenny cottage] and took care of his sick wife with the help of his deceased brother John's widow, Sarah Sharpe who acted as housekeeper. By now there were reports that Robert had started to drink which, due to his worsening brain condition, was inadvisable. On the morning of Friday, 5 January 1872, Robert Boyd and William Avery went to Camden in a small farm cart. Boyd had some business to attend to, but on the way home the pair stopped at Arnold's Public House[2] for 'some drink'. [3]

George Mills, the sawyer, told the coroner he saw Robert Boyd returning from the village and though he appeared 'to be very much excited; he was mad rather than drunk'. However according to Sarah Sharpe, Boyd 'came home drunk from Camden, and after he came home he drank more brandy' and then rushed into his wife's room for his guns. He failed to get the guns as Augusta had directed Sarah to keep them from him. She handed the guns through the window to her niece Sarah Johnson who ran off, with Boyd calling after her to come back.

Sarah Johnson gave the guns to the sawyer, George Mills, who hid them at the corner of the store and then went to James Stewart telling him that 'the girl's uncle was going to shoot himself'. Stewart apparently replied, 'There is little fear of that; he has more sense.'

Mills then heard Boyd call out, 'Sarah, come here I will not hurt a hair of your head.' Sarah stopped for about a second but then noticed Boyd was carrying a knife, so she again fled and went into the Wrights' house. George Mills reported that it was at this time that he observed Boyd having 'cross-words' with the Superintendent, his brother-in-law James Wright, and making two or three passes with the knife at him. Wright, with Robert following him brandishing the knife, managed to escape when Boyd stumbled.

Boyd then came across James Stewart who was about to mount his horse, and ride to the main house to get assistance from Sir William Macarthur. Boyd

pulled Stewart from his horse and said, ‘Mr. Stewart you are a nice young fellow’, and stabbed him on the left side of his chest penetrating the heart. George Mills and James Wright were horrified, and Mills offered Boyd’s guns to the overseer so that he might protect himself. Wright refused the guns and ran to his house to protect his wife in the fear that Boyd may go there. Boyd turned towards Wright’s house and went in the front door. He was prevented from entering the room where the Wrights and Sarah Johnson were, as Wright had barricaded the door whilst his wife and Sarah escaped through the window.

Boyd left the Wrights’ house by the back door and went first to where Stewart lay, and then went into his own home. It was here that Boyd cut his own throat in the presence of his wife. Augusta’s clothes were covered in blood. He then staggered back to Stewart’s body and dropped the knife before going to Avery’s house. Sir William Macarthur arrived together with John McMahon[4] and told George Mills and his brother to secure him. Boyd offered considerable resistance, but the Mills were able to subdue him and brought him out and placed him on the verandah.

Dr. Edwin[5] Chisholm had been sent for, and arrived about 40 minutes later, and first checked on James Stewart before examining Boyd’s wound, and stitching it. Boyd was left on the verandah and died approximately 15 minutes after having the wound stitched. At the inquest, Dr. Chisholm deposed ‘the deceased had been labouring for some considerable time from disease of the brain, which rendered him liable to violent exhibitions of temper under the least excitement, so that he would not be conscious of what he was doing.’

The friends of James Stewart raised the tribute on the gravestone to the memory of an innocent man.

Stewart      B017 Here in peace and Christian hope rests the body of  
JAMES STEWART son of James Stewart Esq. of Rollands Plains who was  
struck down by the hand of a maniac at Camden Park on 5th January 1872  
aged 25 years. He was a dearly loved and loving son and brother and was  
greatly respected, his many friends have raised this tribute to his memory.

## Notes

1. The Home Farm, the working farm of the Camden Park estate, is better known as Belgeny Farm
2. Arnold was the Innkeeper at the Plough and Harrow Inn in Argyle Street
3. Evidence at the inquest – reported *Sydney Morning Herald*, Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 1872 and *Sydney Gazette* 12<sup>th</sup> January 1872
4. John McMahon had arrived as a convict on the *Blenheim* in 1834 and worked for William Macarthur at *Camden Park*. William Macarthur referred to him as “my own trusty right

hand.” In 1850 he set up his own nursery at Elderslie and was a frequent visitor to Camden Park

5. Dr. Edwin Chisholm had his practice on the corner of Argyle and John Streets on the site for the present Commonwealth Bank

## **Maxamillian Von Zglinicki [1828 – 1898]**

Maxamillian von Zglinicki was born in Poznań,[1] Poland in 1828, the elder son of Count Boguslaw von Zglinicki and Henrietta von Fitzwitz. After Napoleon's defeat, Poznań had become part of Prussia and functioned as the capital of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Poznań. At the time of Maxamillian von Zglinicki's birth Poznań was semi-autonomous, but by 1846 this autonomy had been revoked.

By the early 1840s Zglinicki was in active service in the Austrian Army and had been promoted to Chief Lieutenant. However he became involved in the political troubles which would lead to the first of the two uprisings in Poland. Zglinicki made some incautious political statements which brought him to the attention of the authorities and when warned by a faithful servant that he was to be arrested he fled to England.

He worked in London for a period teaching languages with some success; and then decided to come to Australia, arriving on *The Peru* on 23 December 1852. Zglinicki worked hard teaching French and German but had limited success in finding pupils. On 21 January 1862 he married Bridget O'Hare, from Newry Ireland at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. After his marriage he visited the gold fields of Victoria and 'there gained colonial experience'.[2]

In The *Camden News* obituary Zglinicki was described as 'a man of great stature', and this combined with his military training led to his being induced to join the Queensland Police. Despite the high praise he received from the Queensland authorities, Queensland did not live up to his expectations and he returned to N.S.W.

The N.S.W. Police in Sydney immediately employed him as an interpreter with the rank of Sergeant. When troubles arose in the gold fields he was sent to try and quell the trouble. On another occasion several prisoners were being conveyed from the Sydney Gaol to Berrima. One of the prisoners managed to undo the chains and leg irons fastening the prisoners in the coach in which they were travelling. The prisoners endeavoured to escape, and in the scramble one managed to grab a constable's revolver. Sergeant Zglinicki struggled with him, and disarmed and recaptured him.

Zglinicki was then appointed to Camden and Picton, and later to Scone where he resided for five years; becoming Governor of the Port Macquarie

Gaol. He was then promoted to be in charge of the gaol at Campbelltown but after a prisoner escaped whilst enroute to Sydney he received a rebuff from the authorities. After this he was for many years a sergeant in the mounted police. On his retirement he was awarded a substantial pension for his meritorious service.

During the latter period of his life he resided in Camden where he was a well-known figure. He was one of the thirteen foundation members when Abbotsford Lodge[3] was consecrated on 10 August 1894. He died on 18 January 1898 and was buried in Section B091 with Bro J. D. Rankin conducting the graveside ceremony together with Rev. Cecil John King. Zglinicki left one daughter and four sons.



**Plaque and grave of Maxamillian Von Zglinicki at St John's Cemetery (I Willis, 2021)**

‘Zglinicki B091 In loving memory of MAXAMILIAN VON ZGLINICKI who departed this life 19th Jan 1898 aged 71 years "Thy will be done"’.

## Notes

1. From the 2nd partition of Poland in 1793 until 1806, Poznań was in South Prussia (part of Prussia). From 1806 to 1815, Poznań was part of the Duchy of Warsaw. – “History of Poznań” – Wikipedia
2. “Obituary – the Late Mr. Max Zglinicki” – *Camden News* 27th January 1898
3. Abbotsford Lodge changed its name to Camden Lodge no. 217 in 1916. Rev. Cecil John King was also a member

## **Victor Louis Bosker Haigh M.C. [1883 – 1924]**

Victor Louis Bosker Haigh was born in Kensington, London July 1883 whilst his mother, Rosa nee Bosker, was on a visit to England. His father, Louis Haigh, had remained in Australia to manage the family's business interests as well as fulfill his duties as mayor of Liverpool, a position he held from 1880 to 1890. Having been born with a cleft pallet Victor did not thrive in his first few weeks, and was a sickly baby when he arrived in Australia in October 1883.

The family lived in "Rosebank" a stately home in Speed Street, Liverpool originally designed and built by Varney Parkes for his wife, Mary Cameron Murray. Victor was schooled at home and in 1889 travelled to England with his mother and two sisters, where his mother gave birth to another daughter in July 1889. In February 1890 Rosa received the news that her husband had committed suicide, hanging himself in the stable at "Rosebank". It was thought he may have been suffering monetary difficulties but he left an estate worth £90,000, a sizeable amount. The bereaved wife and children returned to Australia in April 1890.

Victor completed his education at Scots College, Sydney before studying at Sydney University where he obtained a law degree. In 1910 he was admitted to the bar as a barrister and on 27 December 1910 married Leila Marion Rouse, the granddaughter of John Benson Martin of Camden. The couple obviously spent a good deal of time in Camden as Victor was a member of Union Tennis Club, a fairly select group with courts in Elizabeth Street, Camden. It is known that he took part in competitions in 1910 and 1914 and was pictured as a member of the team. To hide his hair lip he had grown a smart moustache.

While he continued with his law career, Victor also took control of Henry Haigh & Son, a company started by his grandfather in Holdsworthly. He quickly turned it into a limited company with himself as the first director. In 1911 the business changed its name to Wool Scour By-Products Ltd. with a capital of £5,000 in shares of £1 each. The first directors were Messrs. George H. Gerber, Victor Haigh, and George Christie. In May 1915 the business was forced to close when the Commonwealth resumed the Holdsworthly property for military purposes for £5,500 despite the plaintiffs claiming £14,818.

Australia was at war in 1915. Along with many of his friends Victor enlisted in the Australian Army but on October 20, 1915 learned that he had been rejected as medically unfit due to an eye defect and his cleft pallet. Not to be deterred he left Sydney in January 1916 and joined the Artillery School,

British Army and was accepted as a Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery Special Reserve.

The recruit rejected by the Australian Army served with distinction in the British Forces. On July 26, 1918 the Supplement to the London Gazette announced the awarding of a Military Cross to –



“Lt. Victor Louis. Bosker **St John’s Church Cemetery Camden (I Willis, 2021)**  
Haigh, R.G.A., Spec.

Res. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He kept close touch with the field batteries and placed his section in positions of extreme danger, in order to protect the batteries. On one occasion he stopped a panic, collecting stragglers and leading them to high ground, where they were most urgently needed. He has crashed one enemy aeroplane and has many times kept his guns firing until forced by heavy fire to withdraw.”

Following the war Victor returned to Australia and took an interest in politics, standing as a candidate for the Progressive Party in the Cumberland Electorate in the state elections in 1919. He was unsuccessful in the elections but continued his political involvement as a member of the executive committee of the Sydney Electorate League.

As with many other World War I veterans Victor suffered bouts of ill-health and depression. Camden was a peaceful haven away from the stresses of Sydney. Victor spent long periods recuperating at ‘Alpha Cottage’ in John Street, Camden with Leila’s sister Nora Beatrice Rouse and her aunts, Eleanor Gertrude Martin and Henrietta Maria Martin. It was during one of his stays in Camden Victor took his own life. On August 19, 1924 sadly he cut his own throat in his room in Alpha Cottage and was buried in Section B022.

B022                      *In loving memory of V.L.B. HAIGH M.C. beloved husband of  
Leila Haigh*

