

CAMDEN HISTORY

Journal of the Camden Historical Society



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CAMDEN HISTORY

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Meetings

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

Museum

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

Camden History, Journal of the Camden Historical Society Inc

The Journal is published in March and September each year. The editor would be pleased to receive articles broadly covering the history of the Camden district. Correspondence can be sent to the society's postal address. The 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: Argyle Street Camden c.1912 (Camden Museum Archives)

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Editor's Notes

This is the start of a new series of the Camden History Journal with a new cover colour. There is a new volume of number five and this edition starts with page one in the new series of journals.



The Camden Historical Society and Camden Library have both had the last volume bound by Goulburn bookbinders The Art of Bookbinding. They make quite a handsome volume which will ensure their longevity into the future. Camden History is one of the most important historical documents in our community and the retention of these journals for the future is very important for the Camden story.

In this edition researcher Dianne Matterson has used maps for the first time and tells the story of changes in a section of the Argyle Street. Her maps add clarity and details to a sometimes complex chain of events. The continual reveal of the story of Camden Park is conducted by author Peter McCall. He looks at the story of the bathhouse, a new invention in the late 18th century for those who could afford it in their big country homes.

The story Byrnes Auctions of Narellan is told by regular author Anne McIntosh, who records the memories of John Fenwick. University student Kaleb Pearson unravels the story of the military uniform in the archive room from the time of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. Society member Julie Wrigley has transcribed a letter written by Ada Goldsmith and her memories of Camden Park in the 1930s.

Royal Oak Inn to the Albert Baker Arcade

Dianne Matterson

The land on which the Albert Baker Arcade stands was one of two adjoining allotments owned by John Lefevre, an early Camden carpenter. He was said by some locals to have been unfairly favoured by the Macarthurs, receiving many contracts, some of which did not go to tender. However, John's carpentry skills were not matched by his financial acumen and by 1843, he was insolvent with debts amounting to £408/9/2½.¹

Royal Oak Inn

By May 1850, the 'Royal Oak Inn' occupied the land, customers were being served ales in its bar room, and William Risley was the owner and publican.² In 1873, the 'Royal Oak Inn' was advertised for sale by William's son, William Risley Jnr, as part of his father's estate. The property had eight rooms, a kitchen and servants' room, 'out offices', stabling, a 22,000-gallon tank and a fruit garden. It occupied $\frac{2}{3}$ of an acre and included a 'detached cottage' (now Woolworth's laneway) that took up 22 feet of the 88-foot frontage.³ By 1881 or perhaps as early as 1873, Charles Waters Snr owned the inn and its neighbouring cottage. With the Waters' Crown Hotel just 45 yards away, perhaps this purchase was a means of removing a bothersome competitor. By 1895, but probably earlier, the inn had ceased trading and was being used as a boarding house.

'Dorisville'

In 1881, Charles Waters Snr put the 'commodious house' with a cellar and full-length verandah on the market, telling potential buyers the underground tank had a 'force pump' and there were sheds, a buggy house, stable and hay-loft at the rear. Ownership would be held under Torrens Title, while the purchaser could use the property as a boarding house, a shop or a hotel. A 50% deposit was required, with the balance paid in equal annual payments over six years at 5% interest. However, the sale was unsuccessful. By the early 1890s, the former inn was a boarding house run by Mrs Wilkinson, and it was during this period the house acquired the name 'Dorisville'.⁴ In 1895, the boarding house and 'detached cottage' were advertised for auction by Charles Waters Jnr as part of his father's estate. The small cottage was sold to Henry Rofe for £325, but 'Dorisville' was withdrawn from sale when the highest bid of £475 was insufficient for the vendor.⁵ Between 1895 and 1929, the property was subdivided, allowing separate title for 'Dorisville' (62-foot frontage) and Mr Rofe's cottage (26-foot frontage).⁶

During Mrs Wilkinson's years as landlady of 'Dorisville', some extraordi-

nary boarders called her establishment home, including Horace Hampton, a ‘well-known scientific palmist’. He was on his ‘national tour’ and could provide customers with a ‘thoroughly reliable and beneficial reading’ of their hand. Verbal reports cost one shilling, written charts were 2 shillings. Then there was Mrs Hilda Murphy, who invited the ladies of Camden to a ‘Viavi Cause’ lecture, during which a series of ‘medical treatments’ would be explained that would cure any number of ailments. Another ‘Dorisville’ resident, Mr W Thwaites, a travelling photographer, advertised that his studio was open and advised the public he could visit them in their homes and would also photograph dairy stock.⁷

Fire

On the night of 18 July 1907, ‘Dorisville’ had a lucky escape when a fire broke out in the neighbouring buildings occupied by Horace Doust, owner of



‘Dorisville’; now the site of the Albert Baker Arcade.

This photograph comes from Museum Archives in the ‘Hotels’ (Crown Hotel) file. The image detail states Langbridges’ Crown Hotel, dating the photo to between 1911-1913. Dorisville is the building with the large, light-coloured roof next to the two-storey building built by the Little brothers in 1908. (D Matterson, 2021)

a furniture shop, and H Rafter, a chemist and dentist. Mrs Wilkinson said she was woken by noises just before 2 a.m. to find the house full of smoke and saw smoke coming from Mr Rafter's premises. The fire bell was rung, but the flames were so fierce that nothing could be saved of the Doust and Rafter premises, despite the Camden Fire Brigade's prompt attendance. However, the brigade was able to save the adjoining Wilkinson and Dunk buildings, but by morning, only smouldering ruins remained of the other two shops. Mrs Wilkinson's furniture survived largely unscathed, but she did sustain a little damage to her roof.⁸

In the years following the fire, a variety of professional and commercial businesses based themselves at Mrs Wilkinson's, amongst whom was Edgar Warr, a dentist from Sydney, who advertised he would see patients two days a week and could be consulted at 'Dorisville', although he would also see patients in their own home. Then there was Miss Sharpe, who notified her 'many customers and friends' that her dressmaking business was now located in her rooms at Mrs Wilkinson's. At the same time, Mr Bellingham, the organist and choirmaster at the Methodist Church, gave lessons in organ, piano, harmony, singing and voice culture and could be contacted in his room at 'Dorisville'.⁹

In 1917, Mrs Wilkinson was preparing to leave 'Dorisville' where she had lived and worked for over 20 years, and called in W Watson to handle the sale of some of her belongings: assorted furniture, washstands, commode, bedpan, fender and irons, floor coverings, kitchen utensils, and 'numerous other articles'.¹⁰ At around the same time, Charles Waters Jnr, who had attempted unsuccessfully to sell the property in 1895, once more put it on the market, perhaps hoping a buyer would be attracted by the likelihood of vacant possession, the 'large block of ground' and its suitability as a boarding house. However, despite its attributes, the property again failed to attract any buyers, but undeterred, Mr Waters alerted the public to its possibilities as a rental property. A few months later, the boarding house was again on the market, on sale for £750 on 'easy terms', but still the buying public remained stubbornly immune to its attractions, and 'Dorisville' remained in the hands of Charles Waters Jnr.¹¹

By 1922, Mrs Skinner was the new landlady of 'Dorisville' and advertised the availability of her 'superior accommodation' for gentlemen and visitors for £1/15/- a week. In 1931, her furnished rooms could be rented with or without the use of the kitchen and had the added convenience of being close to 'shops, the park and the river'.¹² August 1936... a sale at last! Charles Waters Jnr had sold 'Dorisville' to Daniel, John and Patrick Cleary, who intended demolishing the building before erecting 'modern' shops and two residential flats.¹³

Demolition and Reconstruction

In March 1937, the Cleary brothers approached Glen Dunk, asking to buy two roods of his land because it had an Oxley Street frontage. The ground in question was at the rear of Dunk's butchery, and their two adjoining shops and would allow rear access to the newly acquired Cleary property. When Council approved the land's subdivision, the sale was finalised, reducing the depth of the Dunk properties to 225 feet.¹⁴ (See Diagram 1 below) A month later, Dan Cleary submitted plans to Camden Council for a new building comprising three ground floor shops with storerooms at the rear and two flats, each with three rooms and 'conveniences', on the upper storey. H Willis built the structure in brick, adhering to the 1934 Council ordinance requiring the external walls of new buildings fronting onto Argyle Street to be constructed of brick, concrete or stone.¹⁵ One of the shops was designated as a bakery and in December, the 'Golden Crust Bakery' opened under the proprietorship of Joe Routley. Bread, pies, cakes, pastries and Christmas cakes could be purchased, while orders for wedding and birthday cakes would also be filled. Joe was a master baker who was also willing to bake mixtures made at home by locals. Next door was the smallgoods, oyster and fish business of E. Hillier, while the third shop was occupied by William McIntyre, a florist whose award-winning gerberas could be purchased for 9d. About 12 months after construction was completed, the Cleary brothers applied for permission to erect a balcony at the rear of the property. In 1936, Camden Council had ordered that all Argyle Street balconies be removed, so the now redundant timbers from the balcony at the front of the Empire Theatre were re-used at the rear of the new Cleary shops.¹⁶

Over the next decade, the occupancy of the Cleary shops changed. Jack Dunk's Howard Rotary Hoe business was here, along with Holdsworth and Sons' taxi service, James Howarth's Photographic Studio and a dressmaking shop. Mr Cutting took over the 'Golden Crust' Bakery and later sold out to L Hill, and Ray Coleman was the proprietor of the fish and chip shop.¹⁷ By 1950, Daniel Cleary was the sole owner of the building;¹⁸ after Holdsworth & Sons vacated their shop, it was renovated and quickly filled by Albert Baker's barbershop and sports store.¹⁹ S Maguire owned the bakery before he sold it to Mr & Mrs V Fallon. Gordon Howlett bought the Camden Fish Shop from Ray Coleman and quickly renovated the store, installing air conditioning, modern potato peelers and chippers, and stainless steel machinery.²⁰ By 1958, 160 feet at the rear of the shops had been sold, resulting in the northern boundary now being in line with the existing Albert Baker Arcade's rear wall. The following year, Daniel Cleary sold the shops and first-floor residences to Deldoran P/L who, over the next three decades, continued to lease the shops to a variety of businesses, including John and Olive Turner's fish shop, C Shoesmith's bakery and Albert Baker's hairdressing and sports store, the lat-

ter businessman remaining on this site until 1979. Also present in the 1970s and 1980s were Superchick, L Tsigeras' take away shop, Michael Chalker's Music Centre, Macarthur's Selection and Colonial Disc Record Centre.²¹

Albert Baker Arcade

In 1987, a major extension was constructed by builders Ian Williams and Frank Dickinson, who added extra shops at the rear of the former Cleary building. (See Diagram 2 below) The new light brown brick construction took up the allotment's whole depth and included basement parking for the shop owners. The Argyle Street access to the building remains unchanged from the Cleary shops' days, while access at the rear is via either a cement ramp or divided steps. The fused history of the Cleary shops and the Albert Baker Arcade is highlighted by comparing the bricks used for the two constructions. Shops 1-4 in the front portion occupy the building constructed by the Clearys in 1937 and is built in dark brown brick with a façade that is unchanged from the original construction. The back wall and the rear balcony were removed to allow for the 1987 addition. The upper portion of the rear wall is now finished with metal cladding. Bricks from the demolished wall were re-used as a decorative finish above the windows and doors of the new construction.²² The Albert Baker Arcade was opened in November 1987 and included 14 speciality shops and offices that continue to provide a broad range of goods and services to this day. The arcade was named after Albert Baker, former store owner on this site, to acknowledge his extensive community service to Camden and its people over many decades. During the time he lived in Camden, he raised funds for an extensive number of community organisations, served on many committees and lobbied successfully for a variety of local services and facilities.²³

The solid, no-nonsense façade of the Albert Baker Arcade now hides the early colourful era when Risley's 'Royal Oak Inn' and 'Dorisville', for so long the home of Mrs Wilkinson and Mrs Skinner, were a part of the streetscape. However, the arcade does still tip its hat to those earlier days through the use of dark timber mouldings and stained glass as an integral part of the interior construction, providing a subtle link to the past.

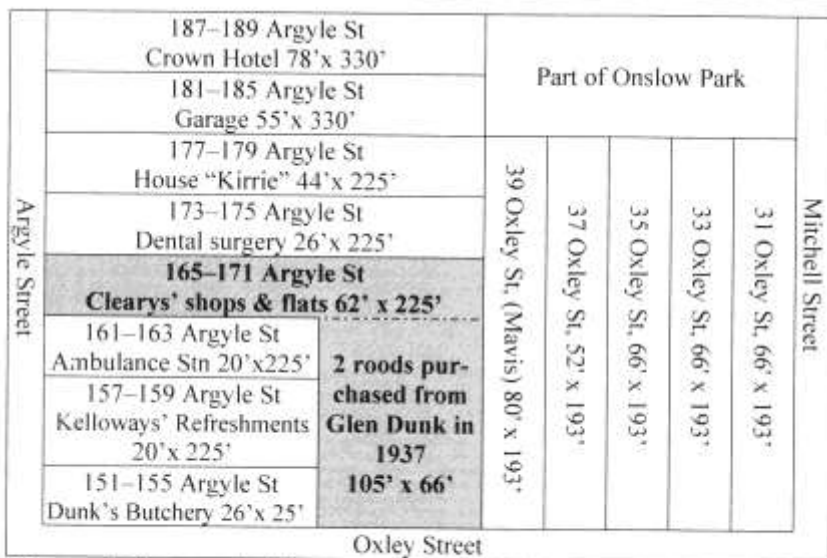


Diagram 1: Not to scale. Measurements: 1947 Valuer General's Assessment. (Created by D. Matterson)

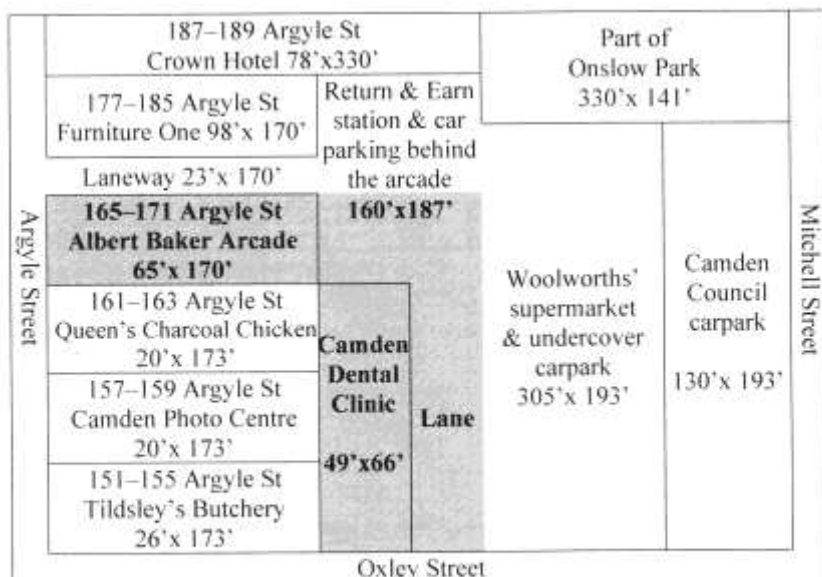


Diagram 2: Not to scale. The area around the arcade in 2021 has a different character to the late 1930s. Shading: land purchased by the Clearys in 1937. Dimensions: N.S.W. Government site 'SIX Maps' (Created by D. Matterson)

Notes

- ¹ Atkinson, A., *Camden: Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales*, pp. 54-55. Colonial Observer, 31 May 1843
- ² Jervis, J., *Camden 1940*, p. 17. *NSW Government Gazette*, 13 Aug 1867, Issue 136 [Supplement], p. 1895; 5 Dec 1865, Issue 256 [Supplement], p. 2737. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 1850; 1 Sept 1873
- ³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 Sept 1873
- ⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Oct 1881. Memories of P Furner. 1929, 1947 Valuer General Assessments
- ⁵ *Camden News*, 28 Nov 1895
- ⁶ 1929 Valuer General's Assessment Book
- ⁷ *Camden News*, 10 Feb 1898; 24 Feb 1898; 8 Aug 1901; 18 Dec 1902
- ⁸ *Camden News*, 18 Jul 1907; 25 Jul 1907
- ⁹ *Camden News*, 12 Nov 1908; 16 Nov 1911; 8 Jul 1909; 5 Jan 1911
- ¹⁰ *Camden News*, 15 Nov 1917
- ¹¹ *Camden News*, 4 Oct 1917; 15 Nov 1917; 28 Feb 1918; 13 Jun 1918
- ¹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 Mar 1922; 11 Mar 1931. *Daily Telegraph*, 19 Nov 1924
- ¹³ *Camden News*, 13 Aug 1936; 4 Feb 1937
- ¹⁴ *Camden News*, 4 Mar 1937
- ¹⁵ *Camden News*, 15 Apr 1937
- ¹⁶ *Camden News*, 15 Apr 1937; 22 Jul 1937; 16 Dec 1937; 30 Dec 1937; 17 Mar 1938; 14 Apr 1938;
- ¹⁷ *Camden News*, 16 Mar 1939; 22 May 1941; 18 Mar 1943; 25 Feb 1943; 15 Apr 1948; 8 Jul 1948; 23 Feb 1950
- ¹⁸ 1950 Valuer General's Assessment Book
- ¹⁹ *Camden News*, 5 Feb 1953. Interview of Albert Baker by Ian Willis, 19 Jul 1993
- ²⁰ *Camden News*, 9 May 1950; 8 Jul 1954; 5 Oct 1954; 7 Oct 1954
- ²¹ 1958 Valuer General's Assessment Book. 1968-1986 Telephone Directories.
- ²² Observation by D. Matterson, 2020
- ²³ *Camden Crier*, 24 Nov 1987. Interview of Albert Baker by Ian Willis, 19 Jul 1993

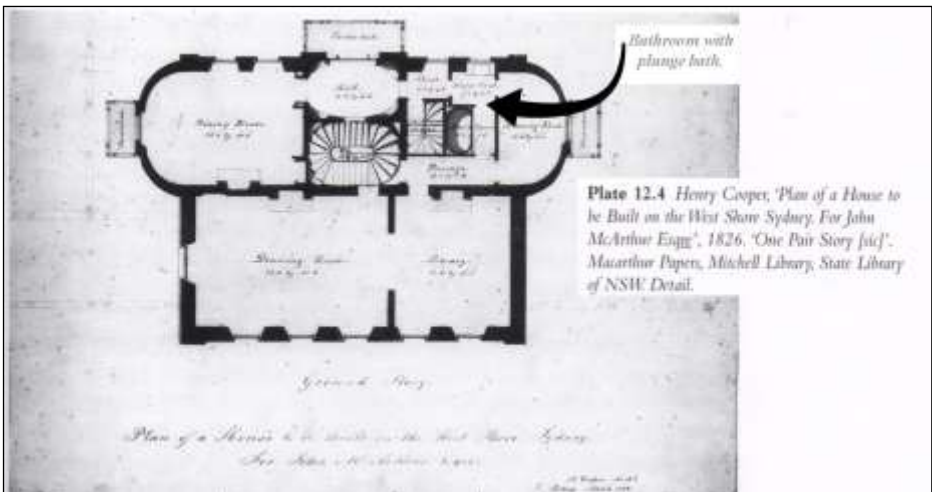
The Camden Park Bathhouse

Peter McCall

By the later 1700s, bathing in England was regarded as having health benefits and also became a sign of social status. George III's visits to Weymouth popularised sea bathing, and the hot springs at Bath became a social hotspot. Following on from this, the addition of baths in the private houses of the wealthy became common.

In Australia, the newly rich John Macarthur saw himself as a founding member of New South Wales's wealthy elite. He had a number of architectural books from England with which he kept up to date with the latest English trends. Many included baths. By the 1820s, he saw the need for a residence to match his perception of himself at the top of the local social tree. At different times he had plans made for large dwellings at Pymont, Parramatta and Camden. Only the Camden one was built. The architect was John Verge.

There were at least two private bathhouses in the Sydney area in the 1820s, both built by Governors of NSW. In Government House's grounds at Parramatta, a bathhouse with water pumped from the Parramatta River was built behind Government House. There was also a bathhouse built on Farm Cove near Government House in Sydney, although this was probably a changing



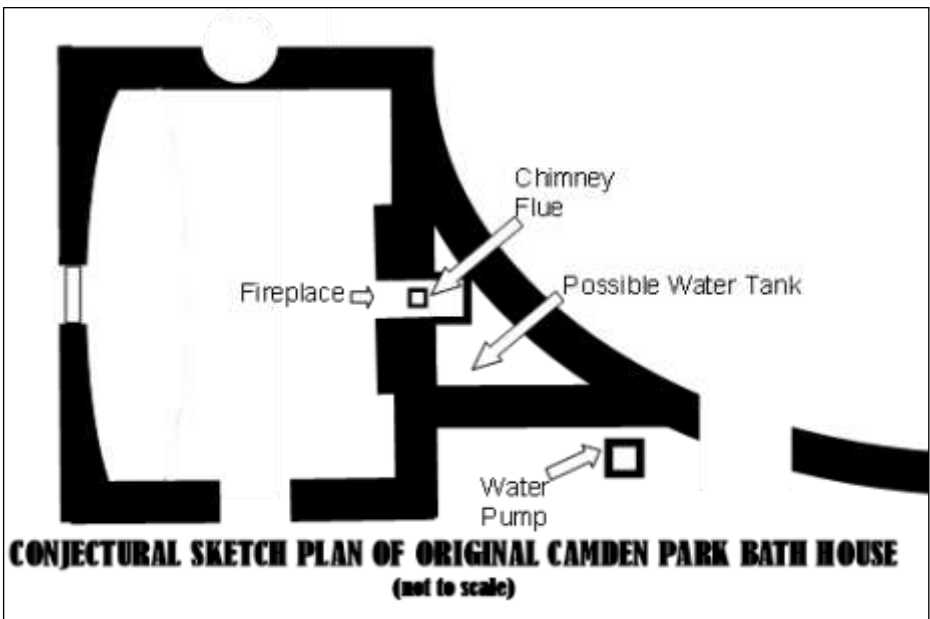
Plan of house at Pymont for Macarthur by Henry Cooper (from Hill)



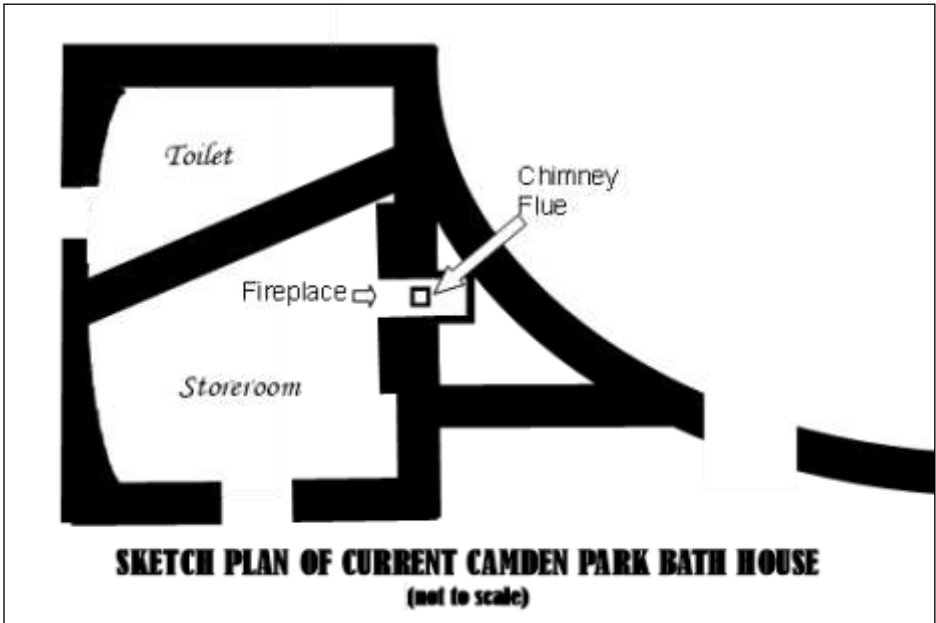
Camden Park House- Bath House on right (P McCall)

room for harbour bathing. Macarthur would have seen baths for private houses in the books, and he may have seen them when he was in England when forced to return over his involvement in a duel and the Rum Rebellion.

The plan for the Pymont house developed by Henry Cooper included a bathroom on the first floor. Beyond some preliminary foundation work, it was not



Bath House Plan Original (P McCall)



Bath House Plan Current (P McCall)

built. However, much of the material for the house was ordered in England and sent out, arriving in early 1827.¹

It is not clear whether this included a bath. Since the material was not used at Pymont, it may have been sold off, used at Elizabeth Farm, his house at Paramatta or held over for later use at Camden Park.²

One of the plans for unrealized extensions to Elizabeth Farm also included a bathroom. These plans were based on Henry Kitchen's plans but were drawn



Ceiling in Bath House showing curves (P McCall)



Fireplace in Bath House (P McCall)

and redrawn a number of times by John Macarthur.³ These date to 1826.

The house at Camden was well advanced when Elizabeth Macarthur (John's wife) wrote to their son Edward in England on 25 February 1833 that “there are some apartments in it nearly ready to accommodate your father with which he has expressed himself highly pleased and has desired a bathhouse to be attached to one. He spoke himself to the architect (Mr Verge) on the subject.” It seems that there were no plans for a bathhouse in any of the original plans. These plans show no structures on the north side of the residence where the bathhouse was built. However, the bathhouse as built fits perfectly with the rest of the main house. A later set of drawings, possibly meant as a basis for a model of the residence, do show the bathhouse.

The bathhouse is a separate pavilion to the north of the main house, although it is connected to a wall that stretches out in a curve from the main house, punctuated by a doorway that allows outdoor access between the front and back of the house. The building is 4.88m wide on the north and south fronts and 3.48m wide on the east and west fronts. The bathhouse is now divided internally into two rooms by a later wall. One room is a toilet, the other a storeroom. There are two doors, one in the centre of the east wall, which gives access to the storeroom, one towards the left side of the north wall. This latter door was probably put in as access to the toilet at a later date.

To understand the internal structure, you have to imagine it without the internal wall. You then can see that the south wall is gently curved, and the ceiling



Entrance to mezzanine room in Bath House with unplastered brick-work (P McCall)

is a shallow dome. Neither of these features are visible from the exterior. This design seems to indicate that the room was meant as more than a garden shed. On the north side in the centre of the curved wall is a fireplace resembling an oven quite high off the ground. Inside there is a square chimney flue 20cm square. The fireplace and the area above are slightly raised from the wall behind it below and on either side. The fireplace would be exactly in the middle if the two rooms' angled wall were not there.

In the modern front storeroom, the angled wall does not reach the ceiling. There is a second straight wall in the space that appears to create a mezzanine room, its floor being the ceiling of the back room (toilet) below. Access to this mezzanine room is through a manhole in the straight wall. The mezzanine room seems unplastered as the bare brick surface is visible there. As the division into two rooms occurred later, there is a possibility the bathhouse was never completely plastered and therefore never finished. There is also the possibility that the plaster was removed at a later date for an unknown reason, but there are no scraps of plaster left on the visible bricks now.



Anonymous Sketch of Bath House possibly 1858 in Camden Park archives.

Externally the north wall is hidden by the curved wall that connects to the house. When the curved wall reaches close to the bathhouse, it divides with a straight wall connecting directly to the bathhouse. This creates a roughly triangular space; its edges are the curved wall, the straight wall, and the bathhouse's north wall. The fireplace is built into the space. Possibly there was a water tank in the rest of the space. Being adjacent to the fireplace, water could have been heated for a bath there. There are underground water cisterns dating from around 1834 beneath and to the side of the bathhouse. A drawing, probably dating from 1858, shows a pump outside the bathhouse and a pipe going up the side of the bathhouse. This pipe may have allowed water to be directly pumped into a water tank in the triangular space. However, it may be a drainpipe from the top of the bathhouse. The pump is not shown in the earlier drawing of the house (including the bathhouse) attributed to John Verge.

Inside the building, there is no physical evidence of access to a water tank. There may have been a pipe or tap from a tank in the room; however, it is also possible that water was accessed by an external tap or pump and carried



Bath House East Front showing pump site (P McCall)

into the room. There is no evidence of a plunge pool in the bathhouse; the floor is now completely covered with concrete. Henry Cooper's 1826 plan for the Macarthur house at Pyrmont shows a bathroom with a plunge bath.

The above is merely a hypothesis. There is no record that the bathhouse required by John Macarthur was ever used by him. The bathhouse is adjacent to the modern kitchen, which was originally probably the main bedroom. It is not certain that John Macarthur ever stayed in Camden Park House as he died before its completion. However, this original main bedroom was finished first and may have been slept in by John Macarthur. The position of the bathhouse makes sense in relation to the bedroom. However, we have no proof that the bathhouse was ever used for bathing. There are no records suggesting that it was. The chimney shows little sign of use- soot etc. The bare bricks in the mezzanine room suggest that the room was not finished. It would have been quite feasible for water to have been heated in the original kitchen and transported to a portable bath anywhere in the house. There are still a number of standing baths stored in the cellar dating from the late nineteenth century. Perhaps these give us a clue to bathing habits at Camden Park House earlier

in the century.

It seems that the pavilion at the northern end of Camden Park House was built as a bathhouse, but it is doubtful that it ever was used as such. Its current use as a toilet and storeroom has a long history, but we cannot assume that it dates back to the 1830s. An answer may be found by further investigations of the soot in the chimneys, the bare brickwork in the mezzanine room and traces of plumbing.

Acknowledgements

Material for this speculation is based on my own observation of the bathhouse. Some of the background to baths in Australia and particularly John Macarthur's interest in them was found in the State Library records. Still, it was more succinctly put in Scott Hill's (2016) "*Paper Houses*" *John Macarthur and the 30-year design process of Camden Park*. Unpublished thesis for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney. John Macarthur-Stanham encouraged me to look at the bathhouse, provided access and took some of the photos.

Notes

1. Hill, Scott (2016) "*Paper Houses*" *John Macarthur and the 30-year design process of Camden Park*. Unpublished thesis for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney, p355.
2. Hill, *Ibid*, p373.
3. Hill, *Ibid*, p442.

Bernie and Barbara Byrne, auctioneers Sixty great years in Narellan

Memories collected by Anne McIntosh

Barbara Byrne was the first female general auctioneer in Australia.



Barbara Byrne, plant auction, 1994 (Camden Museum)

She and Bernie Byrne married more than 60 years ago, after first meeting on Argyle Street. They fell in love in Camden, and later bought the property ‘Girraween’ on the Hume Highway at Narellan, where they both built careers as real estate agents and auctioneers.

‘Girraween’ was their home throughout this time. They sold the property in 2018 and it has since been demolished. Bernie and Barbara live at Carrington and have not had to witness the bulldozing of their much-loved home. This is their story...



Bernie Byrne, experienced auctioneer, 1994 (Camden Museum)



Claude Starr at Camden Park (Byrne family)



Barbara Starr, poised even as a toddler (Byrne family)



Starr children headed to Camden Show: (back row) Robert, Barbara; (front) Michael, Claudia (Byrne family)

Barbara Starr

In June 1935, Barbara Starr was born in Matron Heisie's Maternity Hospital¹ in Camden to a family whose ancestors included convicts, William Jenkins and Eliza Tully. Her ties to this area go back four generations – her mother's father, Davy Nolan was a bullocky who transported agricultural product down Razorback and other supplies through Camden to outlying townships such as Yerranderie². Her father, Claude Henry Starr, worked on 'Camden Park'. [See Family Connections at the end of the article]

Barbara was the first of four children born to Claude Starr and Gertrude Nolan – 2 boys and 2 girls. The family lived in a series of different cottages, all of which were owned by Camden Park. At the end of the war, they were living in 'The Lodge' on the Hume Highway. This area was close to the vacant lot where the Army held its bivouacs. In 1945, one of their trucks overturned. The soldiers approached the nearest residence for assistance. Claude and Gertrude patched them up, fed them and helped them out until the Army could resolve their transport dilemma. Barbara remembers the event as significant because several weeks later, some blokes from the Army arrived at the house



Jackie (left) and Barbara (arms raised) with friend at Camden Park, 1955 (Byrne family)

to thank her parents. They brought ‘beyond rationbook’ supplies – sugar, flour, honey, tins of jam – treats that were almost absent for civilians through the war years.

When she was 12 years old, Barbara’s family moved to a larger Camden Park house on Rosalie Street. On hot summer evenings, her parents would pack a picnic dinner for the family, and they would make their way down through the paddocks to the Nepean River where they would relax and cool off.

In early 1954, Barbara was living at ‘Camden Park’. Quentin MacArthur Stanham had hired a governess from England to look after his children. However, as a divorced man, it would be inappropriate for him to be sharing a house with his young female employee. Barbara was recruited as a ‘house guest/companion’ for the newly arrived governess and quickly became best friends as she introduced Jackie to life in rural NSW.

Barbara worked as a nurse at Camden Hospital. Once a week, as a favour for her friend Enid Clifton who owned Maloney’s Haberdashery on Argyle Street, she would dress the store’s windows.

Bernie Byrne

Bernard Joseph Byrne was born in Mullingar on 18 February 1927 to Bridget and Thomas Byrne. Located in the Irish midlands, Mullingar was a leading agricultural centre renowned for cattle breeding and trading. Bernie’s family



**Bernie Byrne (RHS)
during his Army service
(Byrne family)**

raised cattle and kept greyhounds. Along with his four brothers and two sisters, they would talk pastures, cows, dogs, markets and a whole lot of blarney.

In 1944, Bernie joined the British Army in London. He was ‘demobbed’ in 1948 and emigrated to Australia in 1952. On arriving in Sydney, he stayed in the poor house, and later moved to the YMCA. Jobs were hard to find, so Bernie hit the wealthy suburbs, promoting his services as a gardener. He was soon joined by his best mate, Tommy Donahue, who had followed from Ireland.

A year later, Bernie and Tommy decided to travel around Australia. When they reached Camden, they camped by the river. The rolling green hills and tree-lined fields reminded them of Ireland. They soon both found work at Frost’s dairy³ near Narellan, which paid 14 pounds a week.

A partnership

One day, the young Irishman saw Barbara in the shop window at Maloney’s on Argyle Street. He walked in and said he wanted to buy a tea towel, but he insisted “only from the pretty girl in the window”. Barbara dressed the windows; she wasn’t a sales assistant. Many weeks followed of muddy Irish boots traipsing into Maloneys. Eventually, the manageress, Miss McGreggor, called Barbara into the shop and “to save all our sanity” requested that she serve the cheeky Irishman and go on a date with him.

Romance blossomed and an interesting 18-month courtship followed. Dances were frequent and worth travelling for - from the AI Hall⁴ in Camden, Mount Hunter Hall, Chequers at Lansdowne (near Liverpool) or even in the city. The Camden locals would return and head down to the Camden Valley Inn owned by the Fowlers. This was also the venue for many bucks and hens par-



Claude and Gertrude Starr (Byrne family)

ties. Mrs Fowler trusted the local people with the key and even when the other patrons had departed, their events would continue all night. At 4 or 5 am the boys would cook bacon and eggs. The kitchen would be left spotless as the boys departed for milking or their regular jobs.

Bernie Byrne and Tommy Donahoe were now working at Ritchie's dairy in Menangle, where an impressionable 11-year old brother of Barbara's, Michael Starr, was a frequent visitor. He formed a lifelong friendship with the pair, and their mischievous escapades would become legendary.

Bernie realised early that Gertrude Starr would be key to his success with her daughter. Getting into Barbara's mother's 'good book' became a priority for Bernie, and he knew she would not be a 'push over'.



Bernie with 11 yo Michael Starr at Ritchie's Dairy, Menangle (Byrne family)

However, his charm offensive was not without hurdles. Living and working at Camden Park, Barbara's parents began to hear 'stories' about her gentleman friend...

It was said Bernie had lowered Barbara down a



Mr and Mrs Bernie and Barbara Byrne (Byrne family)

well at the dairy to retrieve a fallen bucket. He'd driven up the cobble-stoned courtyard at Camden Park House with a dozen empty milk cans in the back of his truck – the noise was heard for miles! On another occasion, Bernie got Barbara's father, Claude, tipsy. Then, his greyhound killed Claude's chooks, and to make matters worse, he recruited her younger brothers, Robert and Michael, to bury the corpses. This they did in Claude's vegetable garden. The boys carefully placed them upside down... but left their feet sticking out.

Asked when he might be leaving, Bernie declared that 40 miles was far enough around Australia. "I reckon Australia's the best place in the world; it's half full of bloody Irishmen anyway!" Her parents began to regard him as a permanent fixture.

Married

On 13 January 1956, the wedding bells rang out from St Johns in Camden. Bernie and Barbara were attended by Tom Donahoe and governess, Jackie Laurie. The reception was held at the CWA Hall, near the RSL in Camden.

After honeymooning at The Entrance, Barbara, now a married woman, had to give up nursing. The couple moved to the small servants' quarters at 'Orielson'⁵, on the Northern Road.

Six months later, they relocated to a little cottage with a pretty garden and a



Barbara Starr with her bridesmaid Jackie, January 1956 (Byrne family collection)

snack bar at the front. The cottage was behind Donnelly's Hotel⁶ in Narellan. Bernie and Barbara's catering business was soon underway.

The hotel was on the Hume Highway, and it was very busy. Frank and Marie Donnelly lived upstairs and along with son, Russell. They quenched the thirst and appetite of many passing travellers. Lunch was supplied by Bernie and Barbara from their snack bar.

At that time, 'Smiley' was being filmed at Camden Park. Chips Rafferty would call in at Donnelly's on his way back to Sydney. One busy Sunday, he ordered a rare steak sandwich. Bernie cooked it and delivered it to Chips. Soon after, the actor walked back to the sandwich bar and told Bernie that he'd asked for a *rare* steak sandwich. Bernie threw a fresh steak onto the grill, gave it 30 seconds each side, and made up the sandwich. It looked raw, but Chips said it was the best steak sandwich he'd ever eaten!

Bernie also ran the chook auctions every evening in the main bar – the prize was a frozen chook. These were sourced from local farmers, killed by Bernie, then plucked and dressed by Barbara and her mother, Trudy.

You may recall that Bernie had made it a priority to court his mother-in-law



Wedding party: Jackie, Barbara, Bernie, Tom Donahue, Claude Starr, Gertrude/Trudy (Byrne family collection)

from early times. But he refused to call her ‘Gertrude’ or even ‘Gert’, which is why Barbara’s children grew up with ‘Papa’ (Claude) and ‘Trudy’, rather than a ‘Grandma’ or a ‘Nana’. His wife now carried the nickname ‘Babs’.

The Byrnes’ daughter, Lesley Anne, was born at the snack bar in May 1957. Her godparents were nominated - Tom Donahoe and Jackie Laurie. Managing a baby while working in the pub was not easy, but Frank Donnelly did add an extra room to the cottage for the new arrival.

In 1959, the couple bought an 11-acre property called ‘Girraween’ on the Hume Highway at Narellan. The Rudd family had maintained a tearoom there for many years and they wanted to retire. The Girraween Tearoom was a small venue attached to the main house and capable of seating about 30 people. They hosted dinner meetings for Apex and Rotary, and rented the tearoom for events.

The house was over 120 years old. It sat low to the ground and although it looked inauspicious, it was quite large inside. It might be described as quaint, but was run-down and needed significant repairs. The bathroom and laundry were very basic; there was one outside toilet, pressed dirt floors, and a dilapi-



BJ Byrne Real Estate sign, photographed at the home of Barbara's daughter, Lesley (A McIntosh)

dated kitchen. These all became high priorities for repairs. Bernie started the renovations, declaring, "If I can't fix it with a 6-inch nail, it's not worth fixing."

Meanwhile, Barbara was run off her feet as a mother of an increasingly mobile infant in a busy and noisy business. The breaking point came when she noticed her toddler was missing. After a brief period of panic, the baby was returned by a gentleman who found her on Richardson Road. The independent child had wheeled her dolly in a pram down the highway, around the corner and was on her way to visit her grandmother, Trudy Starr, in Rudd Street. This episode led to Barbara insisting that they sell the business and move to their new home "as soon as possible".

Bernie found a job in real estate. Later, he and Barbara would establish their own real estate business, gain their auctioneer licence and develop 'Girraween' for the increasingly popular 'Saturday auctions'. The growth of their business was facilitated when, in 1980, they bought the adjoining 9-acre property from the Paxtons.

Notes

1. Today, this is the site of the Centrelink office on Broughton St.
2. His name appears on the bullocky memorial in Camden and he is remembered in

the window at Yerranderie Church.

3. The Frosts' land is now part of Oran Park.
4. Agricultural Industries Hall at the bottom of Argyle St
5. Orielson has been preserved on the Narellan side of the Harrington Park estate
6. Today known as the Narellan Hotel.

Family connections

Barbara Starr's great-great-grandfather, William Jenkins, was convicted of stealing harness and sentenced to seven years transportation. He arrived from London on the 'Champion', which docked in Sydney on 17 October 1827.

Her great-great-grandmother, Eliza Tully was convicted for stealing gowns from her employer and was sentenced to seven years transportation. Departing from Cork, she reached Sydney in December 1836.

With permission granted by the Governor of NSW on 2 September 1838, William Jenkins married Eliza Tully. About two years later they moved to The Oaks. In 1851 he is recorded as a farmer at 'Westbrook' Mount Hunter, and later worked as a dairy farmer at Spring Creek. Their daughter, Martha, married Robert Ditton who had been born in Spring Creek in April 1868.

On 20 November 1879, Martha and Robert's daughter, Marcella Ditton, married David Nolan from The Oaks and Burragorang Valley. They lived in the Valley and at The Oaks and bore 16 surviving children, including daughter, Gertrude Florence Nolan. Gertrude married Claude Henry Starr from Camden Park on 4 November 1933. Their daughter Barbara Starr, eldest of four children, married Bernard Joseph Byrne on 13 January 1956 and they raised two daughters at Narellan.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Barbara Byrne and her daughter Lesley-Anne who provided their time, the information and images for this story. Recording stories and memories about the auctions is an ongoing project for the Camden Museum.

Camden Remembers the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF)

Kalebh Pearson

My personal relationship with Camden began with picnics and walks through the local parks with my parents. These childhood memories of semi-rural Camden are some of my fondest, as the green spaces and architecture were a stark contrast to my suburban Sydney home. Upon my return to Camden years later, as a university student of history I recalled visiting the Camden Historical Society years earlier. Now returning with a knowledge and passion for history I am better able to appreciate the extensive collection on display courtesy of the Camden Historical Society and the fascinating history of the Macarthur district. Recently I have had the opportunity to research a unique artefact which is part of the Camden Historical Society display collection.



William Alexander Leask

The focus of this article is the Australian British Commonwealth Occupational Forces (BCOF) uniform and kit bag which belonged to Mr William Alexander Leask. Mr Leask was born on 10 March 1923 in Kirkwall Scotland and made the arduous journey to Australia only a remarkable seven months later on the 12 October 1923. He was accompanied by his brother Arthur Leask who was staggeringly older at twenty-three years of age at the time. Through the travel documents it appears they made this journey alone.

Mr Leask also served during World War II (WWII) as a part of the Australian Infantry 2/25th Battalion after enlisting on the 19 May 1941 at Enoggera. During this time at Enoggera the 2/25th Battalion was rotated back to Australia due to the increasing threat of a Japanese invasion for rifle and jungle training.

This appears to be when Leask joined up due to a need for replacement soldiers because of heavy losses sustained in North Africa earlier in the war. Leask eventually saw combat during the New Guinea campaign of 1944 to

1945 and would have participated in the Battle of Balikpapan one of the final battles of the war. After the conclusion of WWII in the Pacific theatre Leask, along with other members of the 2/25th who had not earned enough points of military service to return home were transferred to the 65th Battalion as a section of the Australian detachment of the BCOF on the 12 October 1945.¹ Leask would have been provided with the uniform now present at Camden during this rotation.



British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF)

During the occupation of Japan, the BCOF was responsible for the Japanese western prefectures of Shimani, Yamaguchi, Tottori, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Shikoku which utilised all branches of the military with the army being placed in Hiro. The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) stationed at Iwakuni and the former Japanese Naval Base at Kure then served the naval needs of the BCOF. Several Australian naval vessels served during this time, including the HMAS Australia and HMAS Hobart with landing ships Maanoora, Westralia and Kanimbla being utilised as transport vessels.²

The BCOF was formed to maintain and enlarge the prestige of the British Commonwealth within Japan and beyond that, to the Allies. The BCOF consisted of the 5th British Infantry Brigade Group, 268th Indian Infantry Brigade Group, New Zealand 9th Infantry Brigade Group and Australian 34th Infantry Brigade Group.³

This marked the first time that Australia took part in a military occupation of a nation defeated in a war in which they had participated. Once on the ground in Japan the BCOF, originally held within their jurisdiction only two of Japan's provinces. However, the responsibilities of the BCOF were to increase as the American presence of the 8th Army commanded by General Douglas MacArthur occupied the role of military government in Japan and withdrew its own occupational forces.⁴

At this point, which was the height of their responsibilities, the BCOF was responsible for 20,000,000 Japanese citizens and 57,000 square kilometres of

Japanese land.⁵ Men like William Leask made this possible. With their skill and discipline, they were able to maintain peace through this tumultuous time in Japanese history. A small but remarkable piece of this history survives within the Camden Historical Society.

The duties of the BCOF were primarily regarding the de-militarisation of Japan. To achieve this task a new organisation within the General Staff Branch known as the Disposal of Enemy Equipment Section (DEES) was created. Initially regular patrols were performed locally and were not coordinated on a large scale. With the creation of the DEES these patrols were organised with the objective of systematically searching far larger areas.⁶ When the BCOF uncovered warlike materials they were either destroyed or returned to the Japanese Home Ministry for repurposing with the intention to aid the recovery of the Japanese people.⁷

The naval component of the BCOF focused on patrolling the Inland Sea in an attempt to stem the flow of smuggling and illegal immigration to Japan by Koreans. This was accomplished with the RAAF air surveys of ships suspected of performing these illegal activities.⁸ In the week prior to the Japanese elections, BCOF teams were instructed to ensure the elections occurred free from corruption and as directed by the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur. They were to be fair, free, and democratic.⁹

The BCOF ensured the safe reconstruction of Japan after their defeat in WWII and was critical to maintaining positive relationships between the Japanese and the Allies. These operations continued as a major objective of the BCOF until the end of 1946 when Japan was mostly pacified, and the BCOF turned mostly to training and basic guard duty. Early 1947 saw the BCOF reduced drastically and by the end of 1948, it was entirely composed of Australians; with the dismantling of the BCOF occurring in 1952 as the powers of the BCOF were transferred to the British Commonwealth Forces Korea.¹⁰



Leask BCOF uniform and author of article K Pearson (K Pearson)

Leask uniform

Mr Leask's uniform was worn by the Australian BCOF in Allied occupied Japan from 1945 to 1948. On the left sleeve of the Leask uniform is the Unit Colour Patch (UCP) which is constructed out of a green rectangle and a black centre. This is also present on the puggarees of the slouch hat on the right side. However, the UCP is not present on the current display. On the left of the slouch hat is the third pattern Australian General Army Service Badge commonly known as the Rising Sun Badge. The right-hand sleeve displays a blue square with the King (Tudor) Crown of the Commonwealth of Great Britain. At the centre-top of the patch and underneath the crown is the title British Commonwealth Forces. The uniform is khaki and present on both sleeves above the respective badges are sewn cloth Australian shoulder titles.

As indicated by the two pin holes on both collars of the tunic, the uniform originally accommodated a pair of Australian General Army Service Collar Badges. Standard to the Australian BCOF uniform is a set of cross-strap braces, a white belt, and white gaiters. However, no cross-strap braces are present on the Leask Uniform indicating that it is a dress uniform. The uniform is accompanied by military issue brown laced Australian Army boots. A total of eleven black buttons known as the Australian Military Forces Button each depict the continent of Australia.

Provenance

Donated to the Camden Historical Society by Mr William A. Leask of Dundas, via Mr Steve Cope, in 1993.

Notes

1. Queensland War Memorial Register, 2/25th Infantry Battalion Plaque.
2. Australian War Memorial, British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-52.
3. Diggers History, BCOF Japan: Our Part in the Commonwealth Occupation Force, paragraph 6.
4. Australian War Memorial, British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-52.
5. Australian War Memorial, British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-52.
6. Diggers History, BCOF Japan: Our Part in the Commonwealth Occupation Force, paragraph 23.
7. Diggers History, BCOF Japan: Our Part in the Commonwealth Occupation Force, paragraph 24.
8. Australian War Memorial, British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-52.
9. Diggers History, BCOF Japan: Our Part in the Commonwealth Occupation Force, paragraph 26.
10. Australian War Memorial, British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1945-52.

All photographs supplied by K Pearson.

Memories of John Fenwick

Interviewed by Anne McIntosh

February 2021

I loved coming over to Camden when I was a kid.

My brother and I were only 13 months apart in age. Our parents had a poultry farm at Kentlyn with around 3500 white hens from Tegels at Heath Road Leppington. We had to help our Mum every morning and afternoon. Dad had a job with Streets Ice cream at Corrimal as a truck driver, so he was usually at work.

In the afternoon, we'd collect the eggs and feed the chooks. Every Wednesday, the truck from L.G.Longhurst and Son, carriers in Campbelltown. would pick up the eggs and take them to the Egg Board in Lidcombe. They would have other stuff on that truck at well. Sometimes they carried fruit, and you could send old hens to the auctions in Ultimo, at what is now the tech college in Harris Street. There were three produce agents/merchants there who handled poultry and fruit and vegies on behalf of small growers close to Sydney. Dad used Roberts Reid and Co, but there was Turners and the PDS as well.

A day out in Camden

Once those jobs were done, during the holidays we'd ride our bikes into Campbelltown with two other local kids. It was around 1962, so we were about 13 or 14 years old at that time. We'd leave the bikes on the verandah at the police station, and walk down to the railway station. We'd be on the 'steam tram' by around 10 am and headed for a 'day of adventure'. The trip to Camden took about 20 minutes and the ticket was sixpence return.

On Tuesdays we'd go to the cattle sale at the Camden yards. We never bought anything – it was just a great place to hang out watching the activity, working out who did what. There was a canteen run by the CWA. You could get an enormous sandwich and an apple slice with a big mug of tea for two shillings.

On Wednesdays, we'd catch 'Pansy' to Camden whenever we could. The dairy cattle were at the saleyards, and if there wasn't much happening there, we could walk up to Hill Street where there was a produce market. Again, we'd just wander around watching what happened. All the lots were local and fresh. Plenty of housewives attended and the sellers would package up the goods into household-sized batches. You could buy 1 lb of peas or beans, and there was a huge range of veges – spinach, corn, cauliflower, cabbages.

I particularly remember the Chinese man who had a draft horse and carried his goods on an old wooden sled with steel runners under the wood to stop the timber from wearing out on the bitumen road. It made a bit of noise on the road! The old horse obviously knew the routine and just ambled up the road at a steady pace with the Chinese gardener standing on the sled holding the reins. He was an elderly guy and he had a big range of different vegetables. I saw him often, but I don't think I ever spoke to him. He had a garden somewhere down on the river.

At lunchtime, we'd head down to the café on Argyle Street, and buy a pie and peas and a pot of tea for 2 /-. You could get a great feed in Camden back then.

We'd head back about 3 pm, picking up our bikes from the police station and cycling home. It was a great day out.

I recall 'Pansy' the steam train very fondly, but at the time it was unremarkable. I've heard that trip included the steepest bit of straight track in NSW, but I don't remember ever walking up Kenny's Hill. One of the guards, who in later years was a customer on our milk run in Campbelltown, told lots of yarns about the dramas on the railway, although I never knew what bits were true. He was convinced that the kids put grease on the tracks to thwart the train on that steep incline.

I have a clear memory of days when the trucks would face delays at the Campbelltown coal loading depot on the rail line. Occasionally the queued trucks stretched almost back to Narellan. Trying to maintain some traffic flow on a single lane of bitumen, the trucks would pull to the side of the road. The train track ran alongside the Narellan Road – it was never fenced. I know some left-side rear vision mirrors were sacrificed whenever Pansy passed.

School

I went to school at Campbelltown High and my brother went to Hurlstone.

Along with our two friends, we joined the Camden Junior Farmers Club* in about 1959, and participated in several of the projects that the movement promoted - cow and calf raising was popular with us, and we also did poultry raising and vegie growing. I was really proud when one of the calves I'd raised sold for the most money at the Camden markets.

After a couple of years there were enough 'Campbelltown-ites' as members of the Camden Club for us to form a club at Campbelltown. That club kept going until the Junior Farmers Movement folded. They had changed the name to Rural Youth, and the Dept of Education had cut funding for the management of the movement, and around that time, there were other things available to entertain young people. I was interested to read in a book about the history of the Junior Farmers Movement in NSW, that Hurlstone Agricul-

tural High School established the first club in New South Wales.

After three years, we both did the first exam, I think it was the Intermediate Certificate, and left school.

Working life

It was my brother's idea that we should go into business together. He was a smart guy and had lots of plans. Our parents were concerned – they knew that many family businesses destroyed relationships and broke up families.

We went ahead regardless, and bought a milk-run that included the main street in Campbelltown. We had around 330 customers, and maintained their supplies for more than 13 years. Neither of us married so we lived together the whole time. I don't think we ever argued.

With the profits we were ultimately able to buy three semitrailers, but the demands of helping our parents, delivering milk and keeping those trucks moving was becoming a huge burden. Something was going to have to give, so we were thrilled to receive an offer, and sold the milk delivery business in 1979.



John Fenwick on the trailer with a load destined for Cobar. This truck would clock over one million miles. John's brother, Robert, spray painted it several times during the time that they owned it. (J Fenwick)

When Kentlyn was redeveloped for the Airds Housing Estate, my father sold up. He and Mum bought a place on Anzac Avenue at Currans Hill. At that time, Jack Fenwick was 71 years old. He started again with another poultry business. They harvested eggs and he sold chooks at Bernie Byrne's Saturday market at Narellan.

We could now focus on the trucks. At one stage we had six semi-trailers. Most of our work came from APM Wood Products in Minto. They were the first factory set up in the new industrial area established by the Macarthur Development Board. They were a diversified timber company, a subsidiary of the giant packaging company AMP which is known today as Amcor – they had paper packaging and a big paper/cardboard recycling facility at Botany and a number of timber mills at Tumut. They used to despatch pre-cut timber trusses and house frames throughout NSW and we were kept busy. Suddenly in 1983 they were gone. Closed down.

Changes

Whatever happened, it did not change the situation for us – my brother and I no longer had enough work to cover our investments. We sold four trucks the night they closed down, but kept one semi-trailer each. We were still sharing a house. My brother picked up casual jobs around the local area, and I had permanent work transporting loads from Gosford, something that I did for 20 years.

My brother, Robert, loved those trucks – he understood the mechanics, could fix them up, spray paint them. He was always planning something, working on the trucks. On Saturdays, he would attend Bernie's [auction] markets, buying up truck bits and pieces that we could use as spares for our own vehicles. We were a good team. When asked why we hadn't married, I would joke that our partners were Mercedes and Benz.

But everything changed on 24 September 1997. When I got the call at 8.27am, I was only a few minutes away. I was one of the first ones there. Robert, had been hit in the head by a steel bar. The incident would be classified an 'industrial accident', but what I saw that day has haunted my memories ever since. Two ambulance crews raced him to Liverpool Hospital. They did surgery that day and again the next day to relieve the pressure on his brain, and then he spent 10 months in Rehabilitation at the Brain Injury Unit. He received excellent care there, but it's a place where you never want to be. At the time, Robert was 47 years old, but there were lots of younger people who had been in terrible accidents. The place itself was not tragic, but there was the tragedy of lost opportunity, of dreams unfulfilled. (More recently, the media has raised awareness of brain injury through the stories of some prominent people from the wider community who have been through Rehab at the Liverpool Hospital.)

I was now my brother's primary carer, and he stayed with me for more than 18 years. He knew me and trusted me. But he has never learnt to talk. He really enjoyed our daily drives around those places and projects he had known so well. I'd joke that we were checking they were still standing! As we both got older, the challenges grew.

There are lots of memories of Robert's work that remain around Camden. He delivered fabricated steel for a number of buildings using the HIAB crane on his truck to erect them. The largest would be the awning/canopy over the bowsers at what had originally been the Clifton Bros Shell service station, but was then the Caltex petrol station (later to be taken over as Ampol). He did some work at Carrington during the construction of the Werombi Court Nursing Home. At Narellan, Robert erected all the steel work for the Bolger 4Wheel Drive factory.

Whenever I drive through town, I look up towards the saleyards and remember better times when we were kids and the rail lines ran past the Milk Depot and over the road to the Camden train station.

*Among its collection, Camden Museum holds two Young Farmers badges.

Memories of Camden Park Estate Ada Australia Goldsmith

This letter was written in 1934 by Ada Australia Goldsmith (1857-) who married George Murray on 10 April 1879. Her sister referred to in the paper was Emma Walworth Goldsmith (1851-1938) who in 1885 married Robert Henry Druitt, Farm Manager at Camden Park Estate. The letter was found amongst the papers of Robert Leslie Stirling, the great-grandson of Ada Australia Goldsmith and donated in his memory. The letter has the observations of Ada Goldsmith and differs in detail from the records held by the Camden Historical Society.

John Macarthur arrived in the colony of N.S.W. in 1790, as a Lieutenant of the N.S.W. Corps. He was a man of unusual capacity, energy and perseverance, and was well qualified to gain distinction in a much larger sphere than that of Sydney, at the end of that century. He saw the capabilities of the new country for grazing sheep and cattle, and having a few head of both, he determined to utilize the advantages which free grants of land, free labour, and the command of a market offered him in his new home. In 1794 he purchased from an officer sixty Bengal ewes which had been imported from Calcutta, and from a Captain of a transport from Ireland two Irish ewes and a young ram.

From The Cape (Africa) he bought five ewes and three rams of pure merino stock which had been presented by the King of Spain to the Dutch Government. These were guarded against any impure mixture, and also a flock of 1200 of common Cape breed was imported. Specimens of pure merino and Crossbred wool were sent to England and submitted to a Committee of Manufacturers and they reported that the wool was equal to any Merino wool of Spain and the crossbred of considerable value. An addition of nine rams and one ewe from the Royal flock at Kew, England, was made, and Captain John Macarthur devoted his attention to the improvement of his flock.

In 1804 he was granted five thousand acres in perpetuity and the land now known as Camden Park Estate was selected by him, having been the destination of a herd of cattle which had strayed from the Settlement in the first days of its existence. John Macarthur died in 1834, and was buried at Camden [Park], the scene of one of the most successful enterprises that ever blessed the industry of many. His first residence in the Colony was built at Parramatta and is the oldest Colonial residence now standing. He called it Elizabeth

Farm after his wife. A similar residence was built at Camden which is to be seen at the present day. Camden was called after Lord Camden, the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

An assignment of 30 male convicts for the care of stock was made by the Governor of the Colony, exclusive of those hired and retained in Macarthur's service who had served their terms. His total number of servants was about 90.

On choosing The Cowpastures as it was then called on account of the fine herd of cattle found there, Macarthur had camped on a hill overlooking the rich flats of the Nepean River which winds through the property and on that hill in a large tomb enclosed in an acre of ground, planted with lovely English trees, he is buried. This year, 1934, is the 100th Anniversary of his death.

In the year 1895, my brother-in-law, Robert Druitt, son of Archdeacon Druitt, became Manager of Camden Park Estate. He and my sister and their son Elton lived in the original building occupied by Major Macarthur. It consisted of three large cottages built on three sides of a square with wide stone-flagged verandahs, the porches, halls, pantries, kitchens, dairies etc all flagged with large square stones, and stone paths leading to two large brick ovens, one for the quarters of the family and the other for the convict servants who were housed in one of the cottages where the huge kitchen, dairy and pantries were, but in my brother-in-law's time of course never used, a large range having been installed in the kitchen.

There were various pieces of the old furniture still in some of the rooms, black with age, made by the convicts, of Australian red cedar. Wide verandahs opened on to a courtyard and these Rob had enclosed with shutters found piled up in the work sheds, making a needed shade for the many rooms opening on to the verandahs. A cartload of plants and palms from the hot houses would be sent over periodically for the verandahs and house and those in use taken back to the hot houses after a certain time and replenished by others. There were immense work sheds, granaries, stables, blacksmiths' shops, coachhouses etc forming three sides of a square a short distance from the residences, with gardens, paddocks, English trees, and a long pigeon box on high poles. These poles were covered with zinc to prevent the native cats from climbing up to the pigeons at night. There were silos for storage of fodder during drought, and some surface silos, pressed by hydraulic means.

There was also away from the houses on a slope overlooking the river, a large paddock for pigs with firmly built low sheds with cement floors which were flushed out daily and clean straw beds put down, for the Camden Park bacon was and is still one of the choicest on the market, for the pigs are corn



Engraving from Andrew Garran's 'Picturesque Atlas of Australia' first published in 1886 showing the view from Camden Park estate to Camden village. The vista is one of a number created as part of the English landscape aesthetic from hilltops on the estate. The group of farm buildings in the distance are what is known today as Belgenny and in the past as 'The Home Farm'. (Garran 1886)

and milk fed, the bacon sugar cured and smoked.

The stud horses are also noted, and one sees huge Clydesdales, trotting stallions and mares and small pony stallions etc which are stabled at night, hosed and groomed and fed in the mornings and taken each to its individual paddock for the day. And also one sees the descendents of the original Merino stock contentedly feeding on the lovely pastures, not that sheep breeding is still continued for there is kept only a small flock for the sake of the grand old pioneer who introduced them into the Colony. But the original flocks supplied the country with the flocks of later days and Australian Merino wool is sought all over the world.

Major John Macarthur married a Miss Elizabeth Veale, an English girl. She writes of herself as “indolent and inactive” but twenty years later, her husband writing to her remarked “I am perfectly aware of the difficulties you have to contend with and fully convinced that not one woman in a thousand would have the resolution and perseverance to contend with them, or much more to surmount them in the manner you have so happily done. May God Almighty reward you both in this world and next.”

They left two sons, James and William, and four daughters. The former son James married and had one daughter who eventually married a Captain Onslow, and on the death of her father, Sir James, inherited the estate and also properties acquired for him in Sydney and other parts of the state, and also those left by William, her uncle, who died a bachelor. So that when we first became acquainted with Mrs Macarthur Onslow, she was one of the wealthiest women in Australia. One property, Richlands, on the banks of the Wollondilly River near Goulburn, is almost as interesting in the old history of the Colony, as Camden Park. She had a family of five sons and one daughter. Three were at school in England (Eton), one of the eldest, (then) Captain James was in a Regiment in India, and Lieu. George at Camden Park learning the management of the Estate. The eldest is not General James Macarthur Onslow, George went through the Palestine Campaign and became a General, also the others live about Camden.

Miss Sibella Macarthur Onslow vacated the homestead built by her (great) grandfather (John) Sir James, in favour of her eldest brother and lives in a handsome residence (Gilbulla) on part of the Estate. She and her mother were simple gentlewomen and visited my sister’s home frequently and we were also frequent visitors to Camden Park House and to some of their social events. On the event of General James’ marriage I had the pleasure of being amongst the guests at a Garden Party given there in their honour.

During the absence of Mrs Mac-Onslow her daughter and one son to the Queen (Victoria)’s Jubilee, my sister and I used to visit the family on the Park (there were 200) cases of sickness etc and we had a Sunday School at the old Residence, and also a Musical Society at a Library built for the benefit of the families, and many a very happy hour we spent amongst them. I was accompanist, and we formed an orchestra, for so many were good musicians and we taught them Glees and it was a happy evening each week for all. I had a sewing class for girls. And we had a Mother’s Meeting for grownups, and many a parcel of warm clothes found its way into some very poor parishes in Sydney.

The village of Camden itself is extensive and on a hill overlooking it is a

Church built more than 100 years ago surrounded by a Cemetery, grown with English trees and the tower contains a peal of bells, some of which are connected with the clock which chimes the Westminster chimes. Lovely parks contain trees from all countries. But one park near the Homestead is worth describing. A billabong, fed by the overflow of the Nepean River, had an acreage of three acres surrounding it and another lake fed from a small stream. A channel connecting the two lakes forming the shape of a pair of spectacles went by the name of the Spectacle Ponds. The enclosure had been planted with English trees, the first to come from England in the early days. Violets, daffodils, primroses etc were grown there also and one could not see the sky for the glorious trees.

The billabong was almost bottomless, and in the first days, a large pump had been placed on a platform, and the water pumped into casks for domestic use. In our time, the trees had grown round the pump and only the handle and spout and part of the base was visible. The children told me that a horse, cart and man had backed over the platform into the water years ago and they could not be found. I told my brother-in-law who asked Mr George about it and he said that it was almost true for a black diver had gone down and found the horse and cart and evidently the man was pinned underneath, but it was too deep to get them up. Willow trees were amongst those on the edge of the lake grown from cuttings from the Duke of Wellington's grave. I always took our visitors down there for afternoon tea and Elton, my small nephew, had two dogs which drew two carts made especially for them and on these were placed the boxes of edibles.

On one occasion a rabbit started up in front of them and of course they chased it over the paddock upsetting all the nice things over the grass. We had a tripod with a hanging hook to hold the "billy" and we would boil it and make billy tea – the usual method of bush tea making.

At the House gardens were three hot houses containing plants and ferns from all over the world, and also two large fern houses with staghorn, Elkhorn (Australian ferns), tree ferns, asparagus ferns of different kinds, our rocklilies (large orchid) and many others. There are vineyards with Italian grapes and acres and acres of other vineyards and an orchard of one hundred and twenty acres, through which one drives, with various stops for feeds of fruit. Acres of hyacinths, which Sydney florists buy and Cork trees, olive trees beneath which are sheds where fruit is packed 'for market', There was an olive industry in the early days but it fell into disuse, when olive oil was imported.

The Camden Park Homestead is an example of early Colonial architecture. A large two storeyed building with shuttered windows upstairs and shuttered French lights downstairs. Very large rooms and halls, the latter stone flagged.

Square porch entrance supported by large pillars. Wide stone verandahs on the eastern side, overlooking glorious gardens. Very old trees, lovely lawns.

To wander as I have done through these lovely gardens was to meet endless groves and lanes of gorgeous flowers, to find great patches of blazing colour and scents of every blossom, which have been collected from almost every county of the world. Here you bury your face in sweet scented lilac – great trees of it, in forget-me-nots, roses, Lilies of the Valley, rare tulips and orchids and sit under the shade of giant trees and great bushes of exotic growth.

There is a library filled with books as original and valuable and rare as one would wish. And here you are surrounded by marble busts of the founders of the fine Macarthur family. And pictures and photographs of splendid fighting Naval ancestors and also the Army. Major John Macarthur's father was the only survivor of seven brothers who fought at Culloden. Among the painting in the sweet lavender scented Drawing Room with its chintz covered furniture is an early Victorian painting of the beautiful grandmother of the Macarthur family. Rare and famous china in cabinets made specially made for them, equally rare furniture, being further fitting belongings in this home of Old World days and Australian history. Here Royalty is entertained whenever they visit Australia and here Prince Henry will come to visit our oldest and most important home in Australia.

The old homestead or 'The Home Farm' as it is now called as a rambling old building, some of the rooms being very large and others were mere bandboxes, and from the huge kitchen near the servants' quarters to the dining room in the main building, one had to traverse the wide verandahs on the inner sides of the three cottages.

I remember on the first occasion of my being alone, the maids having gone to their homes nearby (being employed from the working families on the Park) I had to wander round these verandahs, past a lot of empty rooms before I finally arrived in the flag stoned kitchen. In one of those empty rooms in the old convict days there had been a murder, so naturally my footsteps were a little hurried past the windows of that room and supper was also a hurried job, for I had not troubled the maids to say to keep me company; and my sister and her husband would not be home till midnight; having driven some miles to a friend's to dinner, leaving "Auntie" with a child of seven.

However, only on two occasions was I alone, for the home was a happy rendezvous for young people with riding and driving parties and picnic parties in an immense "dray" with four horses, afternoon tea at the Spectacle Ponds, swimming in the Nepean River, driving to Church three miles away twice on

Sundays and once in the week. My sister and I were members of a Philharmonic Society in the Village and we also helped at concerts in the neighbouring villages. At one village of the Parish [Cobbitty] we always had a tea meeting on Boxing Day which began at 2.30 p.m., the country folk coming for miles to it and so refreshments had to be available at all hours. There were outdoor sports, and at night an impromptu concert, where a programme of elocution and music by local talent and any musical visitors who would contribute items, kept up the interest of all and sundry till eleven o'clock when there would be a start made for the various homes, some of them miles away and the lads would perhaps have an hour or so's sleep and again in the saddle to get the cows in, in the early morning. We all contributed to cooking and supplying the edibles and they were all such happy days.

The Annual Show was also another event which drew visitors from Sydney and other parts of the country. Being a pastoral district with rich families living throughout, the best of stock etc competed and we always entered for preserves and pickles, flowers, artwork etc and the Governor and family would open the Show and be entertained at the Park and a few days of the Show were full of interest and excitement, year after year.

But one sad day my dear brother-in-law in helping the man take an English bull from a stable to a paddock, was gored. They had taken the bars from the rings in the nostrils and only the halter was left; he sent the men out of the paddock and he loosened the halter himself and was tossed instantly. And so our happy days were ended but the memory still lives and sometimes we travel up to the old cemetery and scrub up a marble cross there and put flowers on a grave.

My sister is eighty-four now and I have her living near me and she is such a dear, brave woman, and although is now suffering with muscular rheumatism, is wonderful.

Donated to the Camden Historical Society in 2018 by Ms Larissa Penn, Naremburn NSW. Found amongst papers of Robert Leslie Sterling son of Beryl May Cumming.

