



A self-guided tour of
Camden Town Centre's
historic properties

Camden

Heritage Walking Tour



Camden Town Begins

Camden sits at the intersection of three tribal boundaries, The Gundungurra, Tharawal and Dharug people. Early Europeans admired the people of this area. Lieutenant Collins described how, at a tribal meeting 1824 'the men from the Cowpastures were the most remarkable. They were rather short, stocky, strong and superbly built. The painting on their bodies, resembling some kinds of coats of mail, added even more to their martial attitude...'

The first few years of colonial settlement were peaceful, with friendly meetings between Aboriginal people and visitors to their lands. But after 1812 Governor Macquarie began to grant large tracts of land in the Camden district to farmers and with that came the reduction in the numbers of kangaroos, and Aborigines naturally began looking to other food sources, and this of course brought them into direct conflict with pioneers.

Lord Camden, the Colonial Secretary, ordered Governor King to grant John Macarthur 'not less than 5000 acres of land', and from this starting point, Macarthur went on to pioneer the Australian wool industry and to this day Australia produces world class Merino wool.

Macarthur was resistant to the creation of a township near his estate and declined to surrender 320 acres of his land for such a purpose, fearing that the formation of a town would 'greatly endanger the security of the... estate.'



John Macarthur

In 1836, two years after John Macarthur's death, the township of Camden was surveyed and land was offered for sale in 1840, in 100 allotments of half an acre each.

Provisions were made for the erection of a 'highly picturesque and commanding' Church and a 'first rate commodious hotel'. By February in 1840 construction of the Camden Inn had already begun and it was licensed to a Joseph Goodluck on June 21, 1842.

During the construction of the town, resourceful locals had to be creative in their use of the available buildings. For example, the Post Office was originally located in the Old Court House in Cawdor until it relocated to Argyle Street in 1941. Early meetings of the Court were held in the unfinished Camden Inn until 1841, when it was relocated to a bark hut near the old Railway station. The Court remained there until the Court House was built on John Street.

Camden has continued to grow and develop and is currently the fastest growing region in New South Wales.

Camden

Just over an hour from Sydney, Camden is the perfect combination of rustic charm and modern convenience. The cultural heart of the region that birthed Australian agriculture, Camden holds a unique place in Australian history.

Featuring a large number of well preserved historic buildings from the original court house, to the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industry (A.H. & I.) Society Hall, which is still in use more than 100 years after it was built, Camden is an astonishingly intact country township.



John Street, Camden by 1890

This brochure will guide you through Camden's rich and varied history. Take the tour at your own pace, perhaps stopping for lunch at one of the many fine cafés in Camden's town centre, and see how Camden has retained the charm of yesteryear.



John Street, Camden



Old School of Arts

Library, Museum & Fire Station

1 40 John Street, Camden

A glass galleria now joins the Library, Museum and former Fire Station creating an exciting cultural and heritage precinct in the heart of Camden. The precinct is home to the Camden Museum, the Library's Local History Collection and the Camden Area Family History Association.

Opened in 1866 as the Camden School of Arts, the Camden Library has transformed over the years. It was the site of the first Camden Municipal Council meeting in 1889 and for a time, was the permanent base of council offices. In 1963, the original two storey fascia was pulled down, and the current single storey building built in its place with the same bricks.

The Fire Station, thought to have been built shortly after 1867, was originally used as a Temperance Hall and meeting venue. The adjacent museum has an extensive local history display as well as a number of historical publications available for purchase.

LIBRARY OPENING HOURS

Monday, Wednesday and Friday:	9.30am – 5pm
Tuesday and Thursday:	9.30am – 8pm
Saturday:	9am – Midday

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 11am - 4pm



Camden Court House

2 31 John Street, Camden

After the court was transferred from Cawdor to Camden in 1841, the Macarthurs offered an allotment of land as the site for a court house. An interim wooden lock up was constructed and in 1857 the present court house was completed with cells underneath and at the rear.



Former Police Station

3 35 John Street, Camden

In 1878 the Police Barracks were built. They were a significant upgrade from the wooden building adjoining the Court House, where the Chief Constable previously resided.



Macaria

4 37 John Street, Camden

Built in the 19th century by entrepreneur Henry Thompson, Macaria has served as a home, grammar school and Council offices. Widely reputed to be haunted, it is a fine example of the period's architecture. Currently home to the Alan Baker Art Gallery. The gallery showcases works from local artist Alan Baker and others.

GALLERY OPENING HOURS

Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 11am - 4pm



Mrs Larkin's Place

Camden Cottage / The Epicure Store

5 39 John Street, Camden

Another building built by Henry Thompson, dating back to the 1840s. Once the home of prominent Camden citizen, auctioneer and Mayor, Cpt William Larkin, it now houses The Epicure Store.



National Australia Bank

6 125 - 127 Argyle Street, Camden

The Bank opened in 1878. Note the original cast iron lace work and medallion of Queen Victoria's head on the iron gates.



Camden Post Office

7 135 - 139 Argyle Street, Camden

The earliest postal records indicate that the first post office in Camden operated from 1 May 1841, most likely relocated from the original site in Cawdor, which exchanged mail three times per week with Sydney. Records indicate that Mrs Eliza Pearson operated the Camden post office from 1841, and that daily mail was exchanged by 1846 and that postage was charged at 7p.



Royal Foresters Hall

8 147 Argyle Street, Camden

Built by a branch of the Royal Foresters Lodge in 1908, the building housed the Empire Movie Picture Theatre until the late 1930s, and has since housed a variety of retail outlets.



Military Drill Hall

A.H.&I. Society Hall

9 189 Argyle Street, Camden

Built in 1894 as a military drill hall, the brick front was added by the Camden A.H&I Society in 1936 together with the entrance to Onslow Park. The Hall is owned by the Camden Show Society and is utilised by the community to this day for major events, including Camden Country Show.



Games at the Camden Showgrounds in times past.



Macarthur Park

10 Cnr Menangle and Park Streets, Camden

Macarthur Park was originally part of the 5400 acres 'North Camden' land grant made to John Macarthur in 1825, eight years prior to his death. Six acres were gifted to the people of Camden by his granddaughter, Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow on 8 June 1905. Council holds the park in perpetuity for the people of Camden and named the park after her father, James Macarthur.

The four wooden gates are the same as those first constructed in the early 1900s, the fence builder was John Comyns and Fred Dowle was awarded the contract to plough the beds ready for tree planting. The local MP, F. Downes, secured a grant of £50 from the State Government and a similar amount was subscribed by residents to fund the park's development.

The two palm trees either side of the main entrance off Menangle Rd were planted during the official opening in 1906 which was officiated by Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow. The palm trees at the southern end of the memorial gardens were planted by veterans returning from World War I.

In 1910 a tree planting program was carried out and town water was laid, and in 1912 a further planting of 100 trees was undertaken. To honour Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow after her death in 1911, subscriptions were raised by the public to fund the construction of the shelter within Macarthur Park which opened in 1913.

In 1920, just after the conclusion of World War I, the Council was considering various options for a suitable soldiers memorial for the park, and Macarthur Park now features a cenotaph to commemorate those who fought in WWI. The present cenotaph was created and built by Percy Butler and was paid for by public subscription. In 1922 it was unveiled by Mrs Hector Small, a



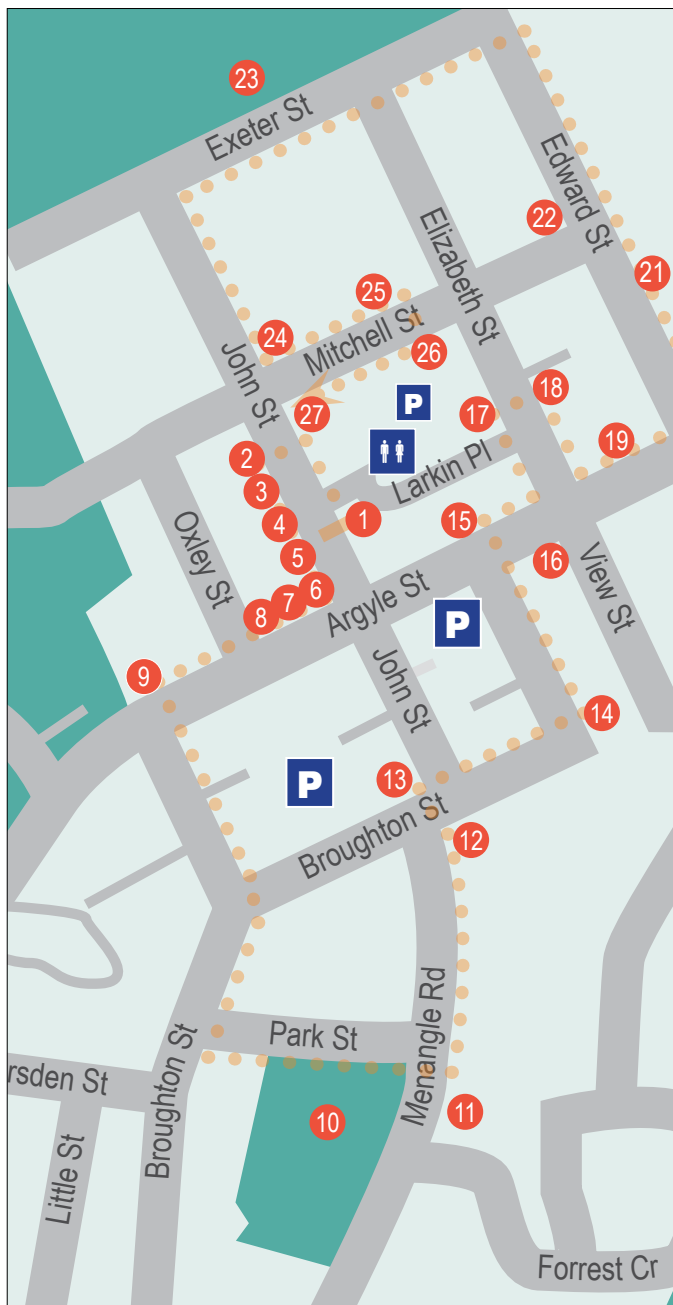
widow of one of the soldiers killed in the war.

That same year the memorial gates were presented as a gift from Dr F. West, and unveiled by Miss Macarthur-Onslow. The stonemason was W. Kerwin who also an Alderman of the Council.

The three guns around the cenotaph were received in 1920 from the Federal Government to form War Trophies as part of the Local War Memorial Grant. The guns comprise two German Field pieces and one Turkish Field Gun. The wheels of the Turkish gun were restored in 1979 by the Council and wheelwright Tom Peel of Theresa Park. The barrel of this gun is heavily inscribed in Arabic. The sundial was a gift from Miss A. Furner.

Macarthur Park abounds in beautiful flowers. In 1964 the rose garden was laid out and the roses were planted in 1965, the sandstone edging was salvaged from original Camden guttering dating to the 1800s. The W.H. Anderson Memorial Drinking Fountain was previously located at the intersection of John and Argyle Streets but was moved to the park after two mishaps involving runaway horse wagons in 1937.

The 'Wisteria Walk' consisting of a pergola and paved walkway, was completed in December 1983, features sandstone saved from the old Camden kerbed streets and is planted with six different flowering wisterias. The Rose Garden was constructed with assistance from the State Youth Corps Employment Scheme and was completed in February 1984, showcasing 30 varieties of modern rose. The Park is also heavily planted with Jacaranda trees giving the Park a beautiful purple blush in Spring.





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St John's Rectory

11 10 Menangle Road, Camden

Like many heritage buildings in the area, the site was provided by the Macarthurs and the rectory was built in 1859.



St John's Anglican Church

12 6 Menangle Road, Camden

Erected on land specially selected and given by the Macarthurs, the foundation stone was laid by Bishop Broughton on 3 November 1840. The final 'decorated gothic' design is attributed to several prominent architects, Hume, Cunningham (England), Mortimer Lewis and Blackett. The builder was R. Basden who used 386,000 bricks, with the hammer beam roof timber work by Wheeler, roof shingles by J. Le Fevre, stone flagging by W. Buchan, all materials being locally sourced. The needle spire is 38m high. The church was completed in 1849 and consecrated on 7 June.



Dr. Crookston's House

13 75 John Street, Camden

Similar in size and character to St. John's Rectory, it was built by the Macarthurs for one of their overseers, Mr Druitt, circa 1880. Dr RM Crookston ran his medical practice from the house from 1913 until his death in 1978.



Brookfield House

14 32 Hill Street, Camden

Believed to have been built by the Macarthur family in 1897, Brookfield House is a lovely example of a Victorian terrace, featuring cast iron lace and extensive lead light windows.



Commercial Banking Co

Plough & Harrow Inn

15 75 Argyle Street, Camden

Originally a single storey building, built by Samuel Arnold who arrived in Camden from the Isle of Wight, in 1836 with 14 others nominated by the Macarthurs to work at Camden Park. Arnold had previously established a wheelwright business on the corner of Argyle and Hill Streets in 1841 and later built the Plough and Harrow Inn which was leased to Thomas Brennan. The second storey was added in 1885 and remains a relic in the Camden main street which is now dominated by shopfronts.



Reeves' House

16 44 Argyle Street, Camden

Previously known as the White House, this home was erected in 1889 for school teacher and Mayor, Henry Pollock Reeves.



Camden Picture Theatre

17 39 Elizabeth Street, Camden

Once Camden's second picture theatre, built during the Depression years and operated by Jack Fox and James Pinkerton. 1961 saw the closure of the cinema and in 1963 the building was transformed by the Holyoake family to its present use.



Butter & Bacon Factory & Former Railway Station

The Italian Food Project & Surrounds

18 40 Elizabeth Street, Camden

This site originally housed the Camden Butter and Bacon Factory, which was built by Camden Park Estate and operated between 1890 - 1897. Adjacent to the restaurant was the entrance to the former Camden Railway Station which took up a significant part of this block, including the area currently occupied by McDonalds. Railway services ran between Campbelltown and Camden transporting people and produce on a narrow gauge line. The last train ran on New Year's Day 1963.



Family on the railway



Bank of New South Wales

White Lady Funerals

19 23 Argyle Street, Camden

In 1865 the Bank of New South Wales opened its first premises in Camden, later moving to the corner of Argyle and John Streets.



Camden Vale Milk Depot

20 Cnr Edward and Argyle Streets, Camden

The foundation stone of the Camden Vale Milk Depot was laid in 1926 by the wife of Francis Arthur Macarthur-Onslow after the previous wood building was destroyed by fire.



Camden Stock Sale Yards

21 Edward Street, Camden

The weekly stock market was started by William Inglis in 1867, originally situated behind the Plough and Harrow Inn, the markets moved in 1940 to the present location. Sales are held every Tuesday and Wednesday for livestock including beef and dairy cattle, horses, pigs, calves, sheep and goats. Camden is the largest stock selling centre within 100kms of Sydney.



Nepean House

22 1 Mitchell Street, Camden

Originally owned by the Macarthur family, this property was sold to James Bensley in 1855 for £75. It is thought the house was built between 1855 and 1859. The small gabled windows on the first floor and the roofline have decorative bargeboards. The cast iron railings on the veranda are a later addition.



Camden Town Farm

Miss Davies' Dairy

23 Exeter Street, Camden

This 52 hectare flood prone property on the edge of town is an important feature of the rural fringe that surrounds Camden township. Its use as a dairy dates back to the 19th century and for a time was used as a Chinese market garden. The farm was bequeathed to the Camden community by the colourful character Llewella Davies, or Miss Camden as she was also known, after her death in 2000.

Today Camden Town Farm is a unique green space which remains a working farm, sustainably grazing dairy and beef cattle and growing lucerne. In addition to a variety of events such as Taste Food and Wine Festival, the Town Farm also hosts a weekly farmer's market selling locally grown and made produce.



Mitchell House

24 29 - 31 Mitchell Street, Camden

A substantial brown brick double terrace building thought to have been built around the same time as Dr Crookston's house circa 1880.



Bransby's Cottage

25 17 Mitchell Street, Camden

Also known as Taplin's Cottage, the earliest recorded tenant was Dr George Bransby who served as a magistrate between 1848 and 1852. This may be Camden's oldest building. Built between 1842 and 1843, it is a fine example of a colonial style Georgian cottage. The cottage originally only consisted of the four room southern portion.



Edithville

26 18 Mitchell Street, Camden

In 1899, Edithville commenced operation as the town's first community hospital and was utilised for this purpose for three years. It ceased operation in 1902 when the present hospital on Menangle Road opened.



St Paul's Catholic Church

27 Cnr John and Mitchell Streets, Camden

The original church building adjoining John Street was built by J.B. Elphinstone and designed by William Munro. The foundation stone was laid by Archbishop Polding in July 1859. In 1986 the Convent and older school classrooms were demolished to make way for the new construction which stands today adjoining Mitchell Street.

Historic Properties of Note

A number of Camden's finest historic properties are located a short drive from the Camden Town Centre. It is important to note that some of these properties are privately owned. Please be considerate if stopping to view the exterior of these properties.

Camden Park House

Elizabeth Macarthur Dr, South Camden

Home to John Macarthur's descendents, the house is only available to view during the open weekend in September each year.



Camelot

Kirkham Lane, Kirkham

Privately owned by the Powers family. Well known for the role it plays in popular TV show 'A Place To Call Home'.



Wivenhoe

Macquarie Grove Rd, Cobbitty

Situated on the grounds of Mater Dei School, Wivenhoe is available for guided tours. Bookings essential (02) 4655 7057



Studley Park House

Lodges Rd, Narellan

Widely rumoured to be haunted Studley Park House is located within the picturesque Camden Golf Club.



Camden Museum

The history of the Camden district is as old as Australia itself. Wander through Camden Museum and explore the large collection of Aboriginal and 20th Century artefacts. Interesting displays reflect everyday life in the Camden district. Share in the familiar experiences of the community: joy and grief; recreation and work; caring and learning; past and present.

Address: 40 John Street, Camden

Phone: 02 4655 3400

Hours: Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday
11am - 4pm

Entry: Free

The museum is operated by volunteers and receives no direct government financial assistance. Donations to assist with the Museum's upkeep are gratefully accepted.

Camden Historical Society

Formed in 1957, Camden Historical Society is instrumental in keeping history alive in the Camden district and is responsible for the preservation and display of Camden's heritage through the Camden Museum. At the Museum a team of dedicated volunteers are on hand to assist with enquiries or visitors are welcome to browse the displays independently. Group bookings are welcome and the Museum can be opened at varying times to suit.

The Society has produced several publications which give insight into the rich history of Camden. They can be purchased at the Museum or ordered by mail.

The Camden Historical Society welcomes new members and activities include: social outings; visits to local historic houses; volunteer staffing of the museum and monthly meetings are held at the Museum at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month (excluding January).



For more information contact
Camden Visitor Information Centre
John Oxley Cottage, Camden Valley Way, Elderslie

Phone: (02) 4658 1370
Email: tourism@camden.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.visitcamden.com.au

Hours: 9.30am - 4pm
Open 7 days

Cover Image: St. Paul's Catholic Church