

Camden

Heritage Walking Tour



A Self-guided Tour of Camden Town's
Historic Properties

Camden Town Begins

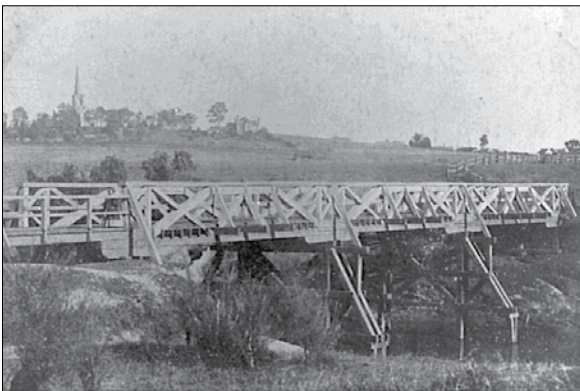
In December, 1830, prominent citizens of the district addressed a memorial to the Governor pointing out that the most eligible site for a township was in the "vicinity of the Cowpastures Bridge on the banks of the Nepean, a central situation in the most populous parts of these districts and abundantly supplied with water".

Surveyor General, Major Thomas Mitchell, reported the western bank was most suitable, and suggested John Macarthur surrender 320 acres of his land for such a purpose. This Macarthur declined to do, fearing that the formation of a town would "greatly endanger the security of the whole establishment on that estate".



John Macarthur

In 1836, two years after his death, Macarthur's sons had a township surveyed. The land was sold in 1840 in 100 half acre allotments. Provision was made for the erection of a Church, "the situation of which will be highly picturesque and commanding", and a "first rate commodious hotel". By February, 1840, this was already under construction and was licensed as the Camden Inn on June 21, 1842, in the name of Joseph Goodluck, who for some years had held a confidential situation under Macarthur.



Cowpasture Bridge, 1800's



Early photos of Camden

Later sales were held in October, 1840, and in July, 1841, 45 lots being sold for 2185 pounds. Sites for Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches were selected, and a school and Post Office established. This latter appears to have been the Old Court House opened at Cawdor in 1825 and removed to Camden in 1841. Meanwhile the early meetings of the Court were held in the unfinished Camden Inn until Goodluck secured his licence in 1842 when the Court moved to a bark hut, afterwards the site of Charker's Butcher Shop near the Railway Station.

Between 1830 and 1860 Camden experienced considerable increase in settlement. It is not possible to describe individually the various families that came during that time. The publication by Sidman 'The Town of Camden' (1939) has extensive references to early families and the book by Dr. Atkinson 'Camden' (1988) also has considerable information on the early settlers to this area.

Information provided by Camden Historical Society.



John Street, Camden by 1890



1 *Library, Museum & Fire Station*

School of Arts

40 John Street

Originally known as the Camden School of Arts which opened in 1866. The first meeting of the Camden Municipal Council (as it was known in those days) was held here in 1889. In 1963 the fascia of the building was pulled down and a single storey building was erected using the same bricks, this building is now the Camden Public Library.

The adjacent Camden Museum has been extended and is open 11am – 4pm Thursday to Sunday and has an extensive local history display as well as a number of historical publications available for purchase. The Fire Station, thought to have been built shortly after 1867, was the former Temperance Hall, used for Council meetings until 1889 when they moved to the School of Arts.

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

The new facility also provides a multi-function room that is used for community events, visiting authors and other events and activities throughout the year.

LIBRARY OPENING HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 9.30am – 5pm

Tuesday, Thursday – 9.30am – 8pm

Saturday – 9am – 12noon

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

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



2 *Court House*

31 John Street

After the court was transferred from Cawdor to Camden in 1841, the Macarthurs offered an allotment of land at 31 John Street as the site for a Court House. A wooden lock up was constructed. In 1857 the present Court House was completed with cells underneath and at the rear.



3 *Former Camden Police Station*

35 John Street

The Police Barracks were built in 1878. Previously there had been a wooden building for the Chief Constable adjoining the Court House.



4 *Macaria*

37 John Street

Macaria was built for Henry Thompson in the mid 19th century. It showcases gabled windows, high chimneys, stone trim, wooden porch and veranda. Macaria was once a Grammar School and for many years the home of Dr. F.W. West and later other medical doctors. It is currently home to Camden Council's Administration Building.



5 Camden Cottage

Mrs Larkins Place

39 John Street

Currently occupied by the Epicure Store. A simple single story home built by Henry Thompson, dating back to the 1840's which was once the home of prominent Camden citizen, auctioneer and Mayor, Captain William Larkin.



6 National Australia Bank

125 - 127 Argyle Street

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



7 Camden Post Office

135 - 139 Argyle Street

The earliest postal records indicate that the first Post Office in Camden operated from 1 May 1841, though probably not at the current site. Earlier in 1836 a Post Office had been established at Cawdor where mail was exchanged with Sydney three times a week. Mrs Eliza Pearson operated the Camden Post Office from 1841 and provided a bond dated 21 August 1841 in which she named as sureties James and William Macarthur of Camden. A record of 1846 showed that daily mail was received and the postage from Sydney was 7 pence.



8 Royal Foresters Lodge Hall

147 Argyle Street

Recently used as a Retrovision Electrical Store. A branch of the Ancient Order of Royal Foresters Lodge built this hall at 147 Argyle Street in 1908. The building functioned as the Empire Movie Picture Theatre until the late 1930's.



9 Camden A.H&I Society Hall

Military Drill Hall

189 Argyle Street

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 used by the community.



AH&I Hall and Crown Hotel during floods, 1898



10 Macarthur Park

Cnr Menangle and Park Streets

The Park was opened on 10 October 1906 and is part of John Macarthur's 'North Camden' grant, covering 5,400 acres and granted to him in 1825, only 8 years before his death, when the whole Estate was about 33,000 acres. The park was a gift to the people of Camden by Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow, a granddaughter of John Macarthur.

In accepting the gift, the Council of the day decided to name the area 'Macarthur Park' in honour of James Macarthur, the donor's father. The gift was made on 8 June 1905, and its original area was 6 acres.

In 1910, a further tree planting program was carried out and town water was laid on. In 1912 a further planting of 100 trees was made. The public subscriptions raised to honour Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow who died in 1911, were used for constructing the 'shelter', opened in 1913.

In 1920 just after World War I, the Council was considering various suggestions as to what would be a suitable 'Soldiers Memorial' for construction in the park.

The four wooden gates are the same as those first constructed. The fence builder was John Comyns. Fred Dowle was awarded the contract to plough the beds ready for tree planting. The local MP, F. Downes, secured a grant of fifty pounds from the State Government and a similar amount was subscribed by residents.

Two palm trees planted in 1906 on either side of the main vehicle entrance off Menangle Road can still be seen. The palm trees on the southern end of the memorial gardens were planted by local returned soldiers after World War I.



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.

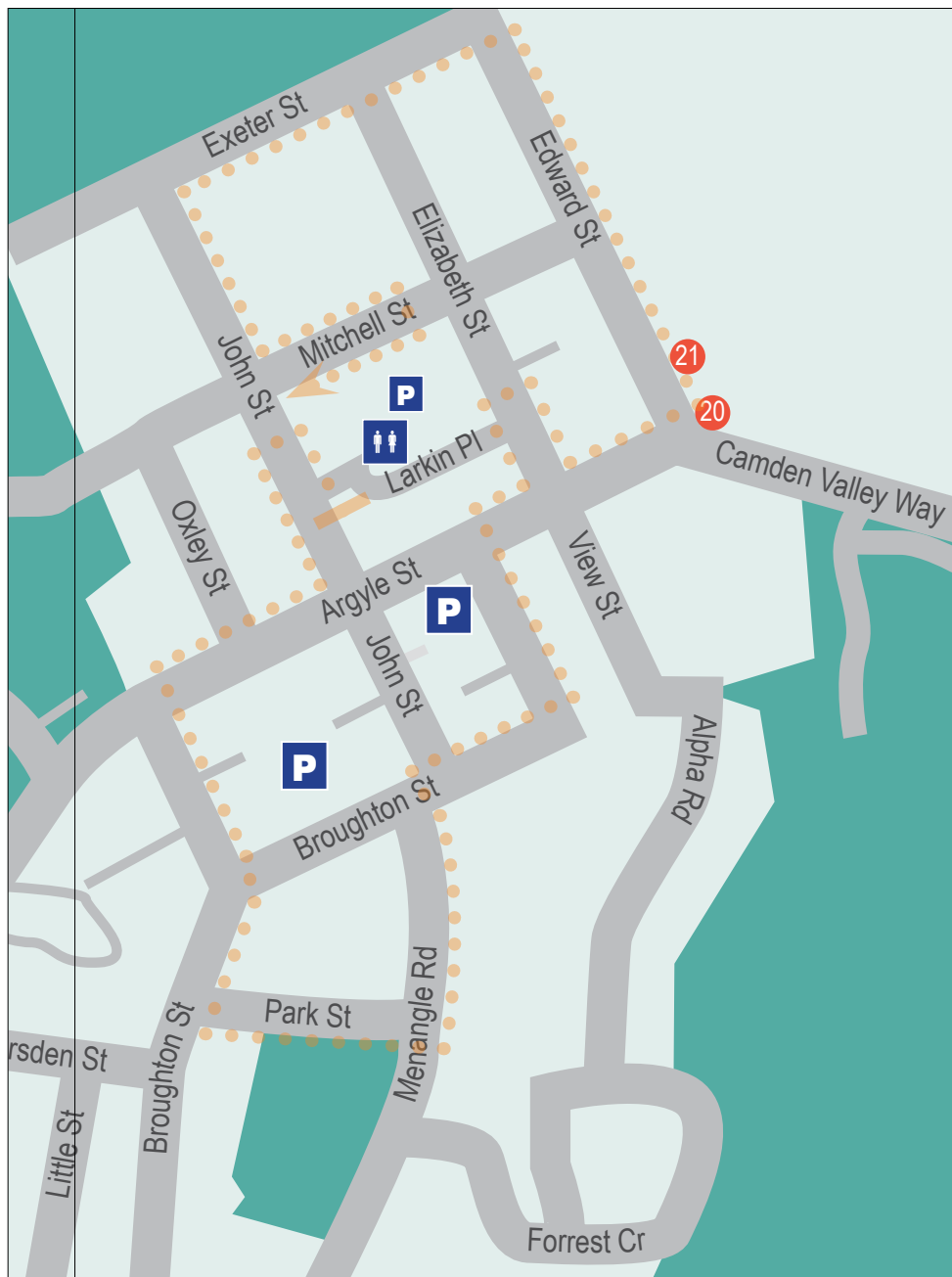
In 1964 the rose garden was laid out and the roses were planted in 1965. The sandstone edging came from Camden guttering in the 1800's. The W.H. Anderson Memorial Drinking Fountain was previously located at the intersection of John and Argyle Streets, Camden and was moved to the park after two mishaps involving runaway horse wagons in 1937. At the base of the fountain is a stone drinking trough for the use of dogs.

The pergola and paved walkway 'Wisteria Walk' was completed in 1983. The sandstone used in this project was saved from old kerbed Camden streets. It was completed in December the same year. The pergola was covered 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. 120 modern roses of 30 different varieties are grown in this section.

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, 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 of two German Field pieces and one Turkish Field Gun.



- 1 Library, Museum & Fire Station
- 2 Court House
- 3 Original Camden Police Station
- 4 Macaria
- 5 Camden Cottage
- 6 National Australia Bank
- 7 Camden Post Office
- 8 Royal Foresters Lodge Hall
- 9 Camden A.H&I Society Hall
- 10 Macarthur Park
- 11 St John's Rectory
- 12 St John's Anglican Church
- 13 Dr. Crookston's House
- 14 Brookfield House
- 15 Argyle Inn
- 16 Reeves House
- 17 Beaurepaires
- 18 The Italian Food Project/
McDonalds Camden
- 19 Guardian Funerals
- 20 Old Milk Depot
- 21 Camden Stock Sale Yards
- 22 Nepean House
- 23 Camden Town Farm
- 24 Mitchell House
- 25 Bransby's Cottage
- 26 Edithville
- 27 St Paul's Catholic Church



11 *St John's Rectory*

10 Menangle Road

The site was given by the Macarthurs and the two storey rectory was built in 1859.



12 *St John's Anglican Church*

6 Menangle Road

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.



13 *Dr. Crookston's House*

75 John Street

Built by the Macarthurs for one of their overseers, Mr Druitt, about 1880. It is similar in size and character to St. John's Rectory.



14 *Brookfield House*

32 Hill Street

This is a large two storey terrace house with interesting cast iron railings and lead light windows.



15 *Plough and Harrow Hotel*

Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney, Camden, then Plough and Harrow Inn

75 Argyle Street

The original section of the building was single storey and built by Samuel Arnold who came from the Isle of Wight with fourteen others in 1836, nominated by the Macarthurs, to work at Camden Park. He established a wheelwright business on the corner of Argyle and Hill Streets in 1841 and later built the Plough and Harrow Inn and leased it to Thomas Brennan. The second storey was built in 1885. It remains as a relic of early Camden in the main street now largely dominated by shop fronts.



16 *Reeves House*

White House

44 Argyle Street

This home was erected in 1889 for prominent school teacher and Mayor, Henry Pollock Reeves.



17 **Beaurepaires** *Camden Picture Theatre* 39 Elizabeth Street

Once Camden's second picture theatre, built during the Depression years and operated by Jack Fox and James Pinkerton. 1961 saw the closure and at that time Arthur Pinkerton was the operator. In 1963 the building was transformed by the Holyoake family to its present use.



18 **The Italian Food Project/ McDonalds Camden** *Camden Butter and Bacon Factory and Camden Railway Station* 40 Elizabeth Street

The original building on this site was built by Camden Park Estate as a Butter and Bacon Factory operating between 1890 and 1897. The area adjacent to the restaurant was the entrance to Camden Railway Station and opened in March 1882. Camden Holden is the site of the old railway station platform where a renovated train carriage remains. The last train to run was on New Years Day, 1963.



Family on the railway



19 **Guardian Funerals** *Bank of New South Wales* 23 Argyle Street

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



20 **Old Milk Depot** Cnr Edward and Argyle Streets

The building has a stone laid by Mayoress of Camden, F.A. Macarthur-Onslow, wife of the Managing Director, Camden Vale Milk Co. Ltd on 8 September 1926.



21 **Camden Stock Sale Yards** Edward Street

Camden weekly stock market was started by William Inglis in 1867 in the sale yards, was situated behind the Plough and Harrow Inn and moved in 1940. Sales are held every Tuesday and Wednesday. Livestock include beef and dairy cattle, horses, pigs, calves, sheep and goats. Camden is the largest stock selling centre within 100kms of Sydney.



22 *Nepean House*

1 Mitchell Street

The house is thought to have been built by James Bensley in approximately 1857. It is an interesting structure with picturesque and colonial characteristics. Small gabled windows on the first floor have decorative carved wooden barge boards, as do the roof gables.



23 *Camden Town Farm*

Miss Davies' Dairy

Exeter Street

This 54 hectare flood prone property on the edge of town is an important part of the rural fringe that surrounds the town and reinforces Camden's rural character. Its use as a dairy dates back to the 19th century and for a time was used for Chinese market gardening. The family of late Llewella Davies, a colourful local identity, operated the farm from 1905 and bequeathed the property to Camden Council for the benefit of the community.

Today Camden Town Farm is a unique green space on the flood plain surrounding Camden that uses sustainable farming practices by a volunteer committee and remains a working farm, grazing dairy and beef cattle and growing lucerne. Various activities take place including produce markets, a community garden and events including Harmony Day, fishing competitions, open days and more. The original slab barn and surrounding building are very popular with artists and photographers alike, particularly for wedding and promotional photos.



24 *Mitchell House*

29 - 31 Mitchell Street

A substantial double terrace building in the brown-brick Camden style. The building is thought to have been built around the same time as Dr Crookston's house around the 1880's.



25 *Bransby's Cottage*

17 Mitchell Street

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 consisted of the four room southern portion.



26 *Edithville*

18 Mitchell Street

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. Edithville dates from the late nineteenth century and has architectural and aesthetic interest.



27 *St Paul's Catholic Church*

Cnr John and Mitchell Streets

The original church building adjoining John Street was built by J.B Elphinstone, designed by William Munro and 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 that stands today adjoining Mitchell Street.

Camden Historical Society

Formed in 1957, Camden Historical Society is instrumental in keeping history alive in the Camden district through Camden Museum and is responsible for the preservation and display of this heritage. Volunteers are on hand to assist or visitors can look for themselves. Group bookings are welcome and the Museum can be opened at varying times to suit.

Activities include social outings, visits to local historic houses, volunteer staffing of the Museum and monthly meetings which are held at the Museum at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday each month, except January.

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

Camden Museum

The history of the Camden district is as old as Australia itself. Its unique heritage unfolds in the exhibited stories and displays as you wander through the large collection of Aboriginal and 20th century material which has been donated by the people of Camden.

These items reflect the every day life and familiar experiences that most of us share; joy and grief, recreation and work, caring and learning, past and present. On your visit to the museum you can enjoy and celebrate the stories of Camden and it's people.

For anyone interested in researching Camden local history, the Museum is full of information which can be found in displays, filing cabinets and book shelves.

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 so a donation to help with the Museum upkeep is gratefully accepted.





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