

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.

Front Cover: Mid-20th century modernism shines through in Laura Jane's kitchen in the ever popular pink of the period. (LJA)

Back Cover: Some local identities at the Cobbitty 130 Anniversary Celebrations in 2016 at the St Pauls Anglican Church Hall LtoR Donald Howard, John Burge, Jill Lummis, Joyce Thorn OAM, Ngaire Thorn (Anne McIntosh, 2016)

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Dr Peter Mylrea OAM

Ian Willis

The founder of this journal and one of its most prolific authors was Dr Peter Mylrea. Peter was a stalwart of the Camden Historical Society over many years and initiated a number of firsts for the society.

Apart from starting this journal, he was instrumental in putting the society's photograph collection online, and archiving the society's map collection.

Peter wrote many articles for the society and amongst the titles were:

PJ Mylrea, Camden District, A History to the 1840s. Camden: CHS, 2002.

Peter Mylrea, Narellan, Two Centuries of Growth, 1810-2010. Camden: CHS, 2011.

Peter Mylrea, Belgenny Farm, Camden. Camden: BFT, 2000.

Peter Mylrea, Belgenny Farm, 1805-1835, The Early Years of the Macarthurs at Camden. Camden, BFT & CHS, 2001.

Pauline Downing, Peter Hayward, Peter Mylrea, Cathey Shepherd, Robert Wheeler, Camden School of Arts - a history : 1850s - 1930s. [Camden, New South Wales] : Camden Historical Society, 2016

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It would not be well known that Peter Mylrea also published other work associated with his employment as a veterinary pathologist. Some of these included:

PJ Mylrea & Division of Information Services, *Raising dairy calves*. Sydney: Dept of Agriculture, 1958.

G.L. McClymont and P.J. Mylrea, *Feeding for milk production* . Glenfield, Veterinary Research Station, Dept of Agriculture, 1958.

P.J. Mylrea and D.W. Dredge, *Glenfield Veterinary Research Station : the physical structure 1916-1990*. Campbelltown, NSW : Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society Inc., 2002.

H. Scott-Orr & P.J. Mylrea (eds), *NSW exotic animal disease control manual*. Sydney : Dept. of Agriculture, New South Wales, 1987.

M G Smeal, I K Hotson, P J Mylrea, A R Jackson, H C Kirton, 'Studies on nematode infections of beef cattle in New South Wales', Jan 1978, *Australian Veterinary Journal*.

P J Mylrea & I K Hotson, 'Serum pepsinogen and the diagnosis of bovine ostertagiasis', Sep 1969, *British Veterinary Journal*.

PJ Mylrea, RJT Hoare, P Colquhoun, IJ Links, RJ Richards, M Barton, 'The NSW Mastitis Control Program'. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, Nov 1977, Vol 53, Iss 11, 534-537.

Mylrea PJ. 'The laboratory diagnosis of diseases in livestock in New South Wales:1890 to 1947'. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 66:114-117. 1989

Mylrea PJ. 'Professional activities at the Glenfield Veterinary Research Station 1929-1959'. *Australian Veterinary History Record* no. 33:14-19. 2002.

Mylrea PJ and Dredge D. 'Professional activities at the Glenfield Veterinary Research Station 1959-1990'. *Australian Veterinary History Record* no. 34:7-12. 2002.

PJ Mylrea, *NSW Department of Agriculture: Veterinary Laboratory Service*. (2002)Online @ http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience/avhs/milestones/NSW_labs.pdf.

Peter Mylrea OAM

John Wrigley

Dr Peter James Mylrea (1928 - 2018) passed away at Camden Hospital on 3 January 2018 after a short illness.

Peter had a distinguished career in agriculture. He graduated in Veterinary Science from Sydney University in 1951 and later obtained his MVSc from the University of Queensland and his PhD degree from Sydney University. He spent his professional career of 37 years in the NSW Department of Agriculture, serving in different parts of the State. His work covered many aspects of the investigation and control of animal disease, both in the field and in the laboratory.

He was at one time Director of Veterinary Research located at the Veterinary Research Station at Glenfield. Later he was appointed to the position of Chief of the Division of Animal Health, from which he retired in 1988. Upon his retirement Peter was asked to write a history of the Department of Agriculture. He completed this and the result was the book *In the Service of Agriculture. A Centennial History of the New South Wales Department of Agri-*

culture 1890 -1990 published by NSW Agriculture and Fisheries in 1990.

Peter left clear directions with his family regarding what he wanted to happen today and what he did not want. We expected no less of him. The only flaw in his customary careful planning was that in his speed of departure, he omitted to give me any such instructions.

So, accordingly I feel under no such restrictions regarding modesty or brevity. I will choose to be brief but there are a number of things that should be said about him at this celebration of his life. We all know what an intensely private person he was and it is typical that he would be uncomfortable with us recalling publicly all the amazing things he did for the town of Camden.

Peter joined the Historical Society in 1994 and became its archivist in 1996. He made it very clear to the society that he was not at all interested in taking office or attending committee meetings. He drew a clear line between work career and his retirement activities.

We were happy to have him on his terms because he then put in years of volunteer work on the history of our district. Peter developed his computer skills to greatly enhance the historical knowledge of the Camden district. He initiated the museum computer catalogue. This computer cataloguing involved many months of work and continued for years.

When he started with the society there were no computers in the museum and none of the catalogue was digitised. While not taking office beyond agreeing to be called the archivist, he had a skill in gathering like-minded people to his projects.

Peter always had to have a project and in fact he had many. I suspect that Margaret has had a lifetime of keeping up with and supporting Peter's projects. So I hope it has been interesting for you Margaret as Peter always had such an inquiring mind and a natural curiosity combined with a great energy to achieve things.

So there were numerous people who worked with him on these many projects and publications. Julie and I were his proof-readers and improvers. He also worked with Ian Willis, Cathey Shepherd, members of ADFAS, the people from here at Belgenny Farm, Robert Wheeler, Jo Oliver and Peter Hayward

His particular interest was in the photograph collection and under his management over 2,600 photos were digitised and made available on the internet for public research and use. In those early days this meant physically taking

the originals of the photos to Penrith where a large high quality scanning machine was located.

Now this scanning can be done to a high quality in-house. He catalogued the Museum's Research Reference Library and the society's extensive historic map collection. He was always interested in maps and made excursions with Robert Wheeler to historic sites to verify map records.

Peter took many photos of rural areas which were being developed for new suburbs and – to the surprise of his family - even undertook aerial flights over Camden in order to take aerial photos of the district. You can see these on the website 'Camden Images Past and Present'.

Within the family Peter was known to have a tendency to discard to the recycling bin any paperwork he decided was no longer needed and sometimes with minimal consultation! So Margaret, you can now keep magazines and papers as long as you wish without wondering what happened to them!

In 2001 Peter was the Foundation Editor of the Journal of the Camden Historical Society for its first five years and continued to be a major contributor. For the Society he wrote and published three books: *Belgenny Farm 1805-1835 Early Years of the Macarthurs at Camden* (first edition 2001, second edition 2007); *Camden District to the 1840s* (2002); and *Narellan – Two Centuries of Growth* (2011). For these books Peter spent considerable time doing original research in the Lands and Title Office in Sydney.

Some of the more-than-twenty articles he contributed to the Journal of the Historical Society were about the wild cattle of the Cowpasture plains; the original village of Cawdor; the development of law courts in the Camden area; European explorers in the Camden region; the Macarthurs' village of Camden; heritage building in Argyle Street; military activities in the late 1800s; rabbit trapping and the Camden freezing works; Camden-Campbelltown Railway; the telephone comes to Camden; water, sewerage, gas and electricity in Camden; photographers in Camden; Camden Fire Brigade; the origin of the name Mount Annan; the location of Mount Taurus; bridges crossing the Nepean River in Camden; swimming in the Nepean River; dairy farming in the Camden district; picture theatres in Camden; advertisements in the Camden News 1896-1914; the centenary of the Royal Foresters' Hall; and the history of the first twenty-five years of the Camden Historical Society.

In 2006 Peter was made a Life Member of the Camden Historical Society in recognition of his substantial contribution to heritage conservation.

The Order of Australia Medal awarded to Peter in 2010 was in recognition of his extraordinary voluntary work within the community of Camden through the Camden Historical Society and for his services to the history of veterinary science in Australia.

Peter was an active member of Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society and in 2016 was the coordinator of the group who researched and produced a book on the history of the Camden School of Arts.

Peter had a great enthusiasm for life and a great interest in nature. He was an honorary guide at the Botanic Gardens at Mount Annan for 10 years and co-wrote the official guide booklet for the gardens. He was a member of the Friends of Belgenny Farm and was also a volunteer guide here at Belgenny and wrote the first booklet for here.

He was a keen walker and joined walking groups over the years. He was also a keen birdwatcher and kept a close eye on the birds on the Camden bike track when he and Margaret lived at Sunset Avenue in Elderslie and on the water birds on the lake at Carrington in recent years. Peter was one of nature's gentlemen and will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.

The society extends deep sympathy to his wife Margaret, daughter Annette, son Anthony and his wife Mardie and their children Rosemary and Matthew, and daughter Jillian.

John Wrigley OAM
Vice President
Camden Historical Society
10 January 2018

Janice Johnson

17 October 2017

John Wrigley

Janice Johnson came to Camden for only the last nineteen years of her life but she certainly made up for any lost time by enthusiastically throwing herself into several local organisations and managing to achieve more in this time than many others achieve in a lifetime.

I will tell you something about her amazing output of original historical research on the Camden people. But I should also remind you of the variety of Janice's interests including her productivity in the realms of horse judging, dog-showing, and embroidery.

Janice was actively involved in a wide range of community activities. She was a member of the Camden Historical Society, Camden Area Family History Society, Camden St John's Anglican Church, Camden Country Wom-



Janice Johnson author and researcher (CNA, 2012)

en's Association and the Camden Show Society. She was a skilled calligrapher and actively exhibited at the Camden Show in floral arrangements and potted plants, winning prizes year after year.

She was a keen rose grower, but once she got hooked on the various history books that she published over several years, her garden became a sacrifice to the wonderful historical discoveries that she was making and was able to tell us about. So we should look at her overgrown garden and think that if she had had a beautiful neat well-kept garden then we would not have the six or so books that she wrote and published in the last ten years.

In 2007 Janice started researching the history of the historic St John's Church cemetery. She compiled a comprehensive data base and her book *If These Gravestones Could Talk* (2010) has been consulted by many family history enthusiasts. Once she became an expert on St John's cemetery she conducted guided tours of the graveyard for visiting groups.

Janice threw herself into the Camden Historical Society and was at various times a research officer, speakers co-ordinator, photo selection committee member and also secretary and treasurer for a period. For the Society she completed seven very comprehensive 'Statements of Significance' folders which are available at the Museum for visitors to read, about items to do with World War I and also the Museum's grand piano and the Onslow uniform.

She was able to, with Dr Ian Willis, obtain a grant for some of her books. She published *The Memoirs of Obed West* in 2011; *Reflections on Old Sydney & Colonial Days* in 2012; and *Reminiscences of Early Camden* in 2013.

She was a co-author of the fourth edition of *They Worked at Camden Park*. In April 2014 the Camden Historical Society launched her book *Camden World War I Diggers 1914 to 1918*. It was a proud moment when we had a book launch in the Museum for her book *Camden World War I Diggers* launched by our then Federal Member Russell Matheson. The book drew on published letters from Camden soldiers and nurses in World War I.

She was also a co-author with Brian Burnett of a CD *Camden Unlocking the Past* (2013) and a co-author with Joy Thorn and John Burge of a book on the St Pauls Graveyard at Cobbitty. Janice's books are popular and will be of

long-term benefit to future researchers. She also has a couple more publications nearly ready to go so we will see if it is possible for these to be published in the future.

One of the things that Janice cared deeply about was St. John's. She loved its serenity as a place of worship, its history, the stained glass windows which she carefully photographed for her book, and the gravestones in the cemetery. And she could remember so much of the details of the people here in her head!

With Peter Hayward (who is unfortunately in Melbourne today) Janice was writing another book about the history of St John's and we hope that will proceed. But I like to think of Janice up on a ladder here taking the photographs of the beautiful windows which we can all enjoy seeing in her book.

Janice told me that she was hoping that you would be able to conduct this service for her today Tony Galea. I would like to acknowledge the excellent support which you and the parishioners have given to her during these difficult last months.

Since 2008 Janice has been a volunteer archivist at the historic Camden Park House. She typed the extensive card catalogue of the library, which is said to be the most important private library in Australia.

I am sure that John and Edwina Macarthur-Stanham would like me to acknowledge here what a wonderful and professional job that Janice did as a volunteer in improving the archives of the Camden Park library and collection.

Over the years Janice has been a prolific columnist in The District Reporter's *Back Then* history page, contributing many articles with excellent original research which revealed aspects of Camden's history not previously published. I know the editor Lee Abrahams was grateful for Janice's support. Janice's exceptional contribution to local heritage was recognised by a Heritage Volunteer Award in April 2014 by the Heritage Council of NSW. Janice was one of the 'heritage heroes' presented with awards during a ceremony at the Justice and Police Museum.

Janice was extremely capable and had very high standards in her research work and I must admit that not all of us were able to match her expectations. She was proud of her achievements and some of us received short shrift in conversations at times. But she was kind to many people and helped a large number with their family histories.

She had a very clever skill in the museum of quietly googling a subject while we were helping a museum visitor. The visitor would then be astonished to find that Janice already had the information available about their ancestors before our conversation was finished. She could also have several websites open at the same time and instantaneously cross reference subjects of interest.

I know of no other local person who combined such computer skills, with detective-like research curiosity and an inexhaustible capacity for hard work. We are all glad to have known Janice Johnson and Camden is a better place for her time as a resident. Peace be with you.

John Wrigley OAM
Vice President
Camden Historical Society

A vintage girl in a modern world, why a 21st century girl loves living a 1950s life

Laura Jane Aulsebrook

Laura is a new member of the Camden Historical Society and has a passion for mid-20th century modernism and its fashions. Here she tells the story of what drives her enthusiasm for this period of history. (Editor)

Pastel coloured petticoats, nipped waists, full skirts, seamed stockings, hat-boxes overflowing with gloves, hats, matching bags and shoes, pearls and screw on earrings... You would be forgiven for thinking that my wardrobe was straight out of the 1950s. Well it is.

My wardrobe doesn't just look like it belongs in the 1950s, it actually came from that time period. The only difference from my wardrobe and that of a typical 1950s girl is the *when*. The girls who originally wore my wardrobe were living in the 1950s...thirty-odd years before I was even born.



Fun in a 50s ballgown at Camelot, Kirkham for A Place to Call Home Ball (LJA)

There are two questions that I seem to be asked more than anything else. “*Where* do you buy your clothes?” and, “*Why?*” To me these are frustrating questions that you think that I would have perfected an answer to by now, however the recipient never seems satisfied with my rather simple answers, conversely though, if I returned the questions, they too would struggle with an answer. “I just shop at places I like” is the response.

Well I do too! In short, excluding mainstream shopping centres, I shop like any other person who likes a particular style, at shops that cater for it. The vintage clothing stores I frequent just happen to be at vintage markets or fairs and online. I find clothes that I like, try them on and

buy them, just like anyone else - I just cannot request another size if the dress I like is not in my size!

I also raid the wardrobes of my friends grandmothers who have hoarded items from their younger years and scour op shops, although out of the close to 200 dresses that I own, perhaps two have come from an op shop, it is not as common as one might think – however they are my favourite place to pick up old linen, doilies and crockery.

The response to “Why?” is more complex. Why does anyone like a particular style or design? As humans we like to surround ourselves with beauty, style and objects that we admire and make us happy, this is really true of humankind in any time in history. For me

this is no different, it just so happens that what I admire, and what makes me happy is a period in history that my parents don't even remember. I cannot quite pinpoint the exact moment that I began my 1950s obsession; I think it was a gradual evolvement. I grew up in a house of antiques and frequenting antique stores thanks to my parents love of turn of the century design.

As a child, it was commonplace for me to be able to identify vintage dolls, Bendigo Pottery, Shelley China and spot the difference between original and reproduction tin toys. Forget Ikea furniture like my friends, my bed was a cast iron bed from the late 1800s as was my marble top washstand. Raised on a diet of Shirley Temple and movie musicals from the Golden Age of Hollywood and devouring books such as Anne of Green Gables Frances Hodgson Burnett novels and Enid Blyton stories only solidified my appreciation of a bygone era. However it was always the mid century design that stood out to me. I loved the colour, the style and silhouette of the feminine clothes.



Pink is the colour of choice for Laura Jane's 1950s styled home. (LJA)

The design, cut and make far exceeded what I saw my peers being attracted to. I loved the daintiness of the china, the uniqueness of the furniture design and above all the history of the era and the fact that by embracing this time period in the 21st century meant that I was somehow preserving it and breathing new life into these clothes, crockery, linen, furniture and more. For when I really think of it, the true answer to “Why?” as in *why* the 50s, *why* the clothes, *why* this lifestyle comes down to this: I want to preserve history and heritage in all elements.

The thought of these beautiful clothes and everyday objects of a bygone era disappearing scares me and I adore the chance to be able to share this in a new era. I love being a bit different and standing out, I love wearing clothing that were once worn by someone sixty odd years ago and imagining what they got up to in those same clothes and most of all – and perhaps most simply - I love the way the fashions and styles of the 1950s feel so perfectly a part of my personality.

Fashion and Style of the 1950s

I may be entirely biased but there is no doubt that the fashion and style in the 1950s was a period like no other. A generation that had grown up during the depression and war years were finding their way in a new world, money was more readily available to be spent on entertainment and lifestyle and society were ready to embrace the abundance of new technology and modern conveniences.

From Tupperware to appliances, petticoats to kitchen gadgets, industry was well aware of this new found disposable income and a booming trade grew up. The key design elements of this era that set it apart was the abundance of colour that was used for everything- from dish drainers to dining room tables, shoes to undergarments, colour – particularly pastels - reigned supreme.

When it comes to clothing – it really was the era of the teenager and young women. Nipped waists with full skirts reigned supreme. Petticoats were *derigueur* – the bigger the better, with the fuller the skirt the more flattering the figure. Colour was constant and fun novelty prints were gaining popularity.

Whilst cottons and poplin were the fabric of choice for fun daywear, tulle, silk and chiffon dominated luxurious eveningwear. The highlight of both was of course, the accessories! No outfit was complete without a hat of course and matching bags and shoes. Novelty brooches, scarfs, strands of pearls and screw on earrings were the jewellery of choice and plastic and Lucite were the newest additions.

Above all what stood out as the utmost aesthetic was the sense of perfectionism and well grooming. Wet sets, pin-curls and weekly salon visits ensured that hair was perfectly set, the rise of the makeup industry saw red or bright pink lipstick and groomed eyebrows as the thing of beauty. Across all elements of life there was the opportunity for colour, for style and for beautiful aesthetics. This was not the disposable industry of today, everything was made to be beautiful and everything was made to last.

Embracing the 1950s in the 21st Century

So how does a 21st Century girl with an iphone, Instagram account and reliance on air-conditioning live a 1950s life? Well, for me it is about embracing the best of both worlds. When I bought my first home in 2017 – not only did I want it to be in the heart of Camden due to the history so alive in the town – I set about giving it a 1950s makeover.

Floorboards replaced the modern carpet, black and white checked lino was sourced to replace the tiles in the kitchen, along with pink handles for kitchen cupboards. An original pink and white kitchen dresser was sourced from Melbourne along with the matching laminate dining room table with chrome legs and coordinating pink and white vinyl chairs. I scoured ebay, estate sales and family and friends grandparents' homes for original 50s sideboards, glass display cabinets, cocktail cabinets and tri-mirror dressing table – complete with dovetail joints.

Thanks to an ongoing glory box I have been keeping since I was fourteen, and the afore mentioned key sources, these were all filled with crockery,



A snippet of Laura Jane's day wardrobe (note there is a separate wardrobe for ball gowns and petticoats!) Vintage hat boxes store everything from scarves, to gloves and of course, hats! (LJA)

glassware, linen and of course fashions that befitted the era. In all respects it looks like a house out of the 1950s – with the added benefit of 21st century air-conditioning. By surrounding myself with a house full of furniture and objects from the 1950s not only do I feel as though I am preserving and continuing to give life to elements of history, that sadly many of my generation would disregard, but I am also surrounding myself with things that make me happy and are aesthetically pleasing. Sometimes I wonder if my friends are as interested in filling their homes with items that make them happy as they are with the latest style and what society dictates their house should look like. In some ways, I suppose I do follow the same trends... just my trends were dictated by the fashion magazines more than sixty years ago!



In Laura Jane's favourite vintage dress at a night at the theatre – it is not unusual for strangers to approach and ask to take her photo. (LJA)

In living in a house that is a tribute to a bygone era and wearing clothing each day that was manufactured before my parents were even born I have built up a reputation as “the 50s” girl. In fact in the twelve months that I have been in Camden I have come to be known by the style of dress that I have, I know that it is because it stands out and is different to the norm. I would hope however if you met me you would soon realise that this lifestyle is more about who I am as a person – it is not a persona I adopt but a lifestyle I lead every day.

I am not alone in my 50s obsession, there is a growing community that are attracted to aesthetics of the era but what I find sets me apart is that it is not something that I turn on or off, my clothes are not a “costume” or special occasion clothes but something that I live every day, by combining the best parts of the past with the conveniences of a modern era to create a lifestyle that I absolutely adore. Instant access to sellers around the world has certainly

made it easier to accumulate my collection and Instagram has opened up a world of likeminded people who share and appreciate the aesthetic.

I am often told I was born in the wrong era and was born too late, however I do not think that was the case. One of the best things about being a vintage girl in the modern world is just that – I get the best of both worlds and I get to share this appreciation with a new generation, hopefully continuing to share the love of the 1950s and saving items otherwise lost to history. And that's just the way I love it. Petticoats, gloves, full skirts, pin curls each night, dainty crockery and pink laminate dining room tables...with air-conditioning, the Internet and an Instagram following.

Laura Jane's pink dining room table is an original laminate pink table with chrome legs. The vintage chairs have been re-vinyled in a coordinating pink. The original kitchen dresser houses her collection of original glassware, china, linen and cook-books. (LJA)



Archaeology and Elderslie Railway Station

Andrew Lundy

Some weeks ago I saw a photograph of Elderslie Railway Station, posted on The Camden Museum's Facebook page, and that image provoked two thoughts. These thoughts are not so much to do with Camden's history, which has been thoroughly researched and documented, but the archaeology of the region.

From 1986 to 2007 I was a history teacher at Elderslie High School. In the senior years I taught mainly Ancient History, and the introduction to that course is archaeology. Finding "hands on" activities for Australian history students, especially in the field of archaeology, can be a challenge, but after some research and a bit of simple observation of the local area, I came up



with two “experiences” for the kids, both within walking distance to the school.

The first was the site of a house, built sometime in the early 20th century, in the field to the south of the then Anglican retirement home, *Hilsyde*, on Hilder St. The only clue to the site were 2 two metre high shrubs, 2 metres apart, right in the middle of a grass paddock.

These two shrubs once guarded the gate and path which led to the front door of the cottage. The students were able to uncover the brick path, and follow it to the site of the front door, then trace their way around the entire perimeter of the house by following the foundations. They even located 2 concrete pads, in the “backyard”, presumably for the water tank and the dunny!

The second was a little more tangible. The Camden/Campbelltown rail line ran straight past the site of what was to become Elderslie high school, but the closest station to the school was actually Kirkham. The old station was about 20 metres to the west of the intersection of Camden Valley Way and Kirkham Lane, verified by old maps of the line.

I took many groups of Year 11 students over to the site, and there they sketched the site and recorded artefacts found. What remained there was the brick foundations of the platform, some weathered timberwork, rusted steel lines and a few sleepers. On the northern(Narellan) side of Kirkham Lane, the students could clearly see the raised rampart, stretching off to Narellan, which once carried the track and trains.

Nothing above ground remains of Elderslie station, but its site is still visible. Directly opposite the Macarthur Rd intersection, there is a flat piece of ground, amid surrounding undulating fields, and right beside Camden Valley Way.

Perhaps a little archaeology on this spot would yield up some artefacts which could be of immense interest to historians of the area and historians of transport?

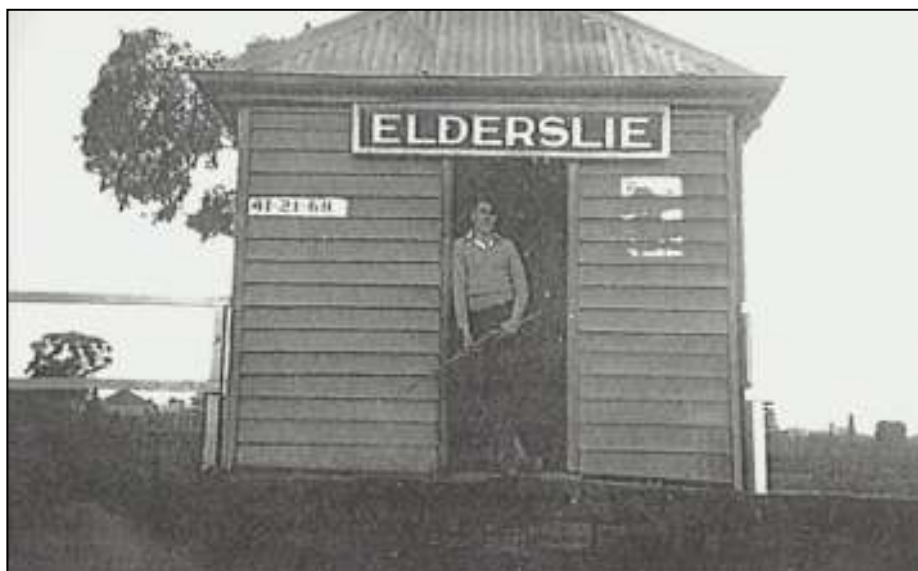
Which leads me to a broader question.

How many historically significant sites have been lost or destroyed in this area over the years? The two sites mentioned earlier in this story are no more. The house is now buried under a housing estate and Kirkham Station’s remains were bulldozed and covered up in 2014 when a massive water line was installed linking Cobbitty and Elderslie.

I'm also intrigued as to what ,if any, archaeological recovery is being done as Camden High School is demolished.

Archaeology can sometimes answer questions that historians cannot.

Maybe something worth considering, as more and more of our historical environment is swallowed by development.



Elderslie Railway Station in the 1960s after the line had closed. Elderslie was the first station out of Camden across the Nepean River near the Macarthur Road intersection. The next station on the line was Kirkham at Kirkham Lane (Camden Images)

John and Nona Souter, the story

Tony Souter

This is the story of a local family who owned a garage in Argyle Street Camden for many years. I asked their son Tony for the story after he posted an item on Facebook celebrating Nona's 95th birthday. (Editor).

John Souter was born in 1919 in Ashfield, Sydney, and had an older brother Ron. Nona was also born in Ashfield in 1923, and was the youngest of five girls and had a younger brother.

John went to Fort Street High School in Petersham, and with a couple of life long friends was a keen boy scout, graduating to rovers when in his mid-teens. He and 3 or 4 friends would plan 3 day hiking weekends away to the Blue Mountains.

Leaving on a Friday afternoon with all their camping gear, food and water in their backpacks, they would board the train at Strathfield for Blackheath.



The magnificent Burragorang Valley where the young Souters hiked as young men. Here the valley is shown in the 1950s before it was flooded for Warragamba Dam. (Camden Images)

From there they would hike south through the Megalong Valley, then onto the Burratorang Valley, a hike of nearly 100kms. The boys would call at a couple of farms and ask if they could stay overnight in a shed.

After a number of these trips, they would write letters to the owners of the farms, saying they expected to be on another hike in some weeks, and ask permission to stay overnight. After making an impression with these farmers, they would be greeted with a healthy baked dinner before retiring to the sheds to sleep.

After hiking through the Burratorang Valley, they would reach Nattai, where they would catch a bus to Camden, then train to Campbelltown, and another train back to Strathfield and home to Ashfield.

Having made this trip on a number of occasions, John came to realize what a wonderful country town Camden was. Predominantly supported by the dairy industry. Camden was surrounded by dairy farms. The Burratorang Valley had also served as the way for silver to be hauled from Yerranderie to Camden, using bullock teams, however, this industry had finished some years earlier.

After leaving school, John worked for John Sands, a well known greeting card manufacturer.

When war broke out in 1939, John like most of his friends signed up for the army as a 20 year old. After a short time he demobilized from the army to the airforce. When signing on to be a pilot at Waverton near North Sydney, he met a new friend Tom Young. They quickly were moved to Narrandera where they were to commence flying training. From then, John and Tom returned to Sydney, then onto Canada for further flying training, then onto England.

After arriving in England in 1941, the trainee pilots were re-assigned to the Middle East, and commenced a long sea journey down the west coast of Africa to round Cape of Good Hope and proceed to Egypt. Along the Atlantic coast, they received orders to proceed to Singapore which was then under grave threat from the Japanese. As they approached Singapore, word was received that the British stronghold has fallen, so John and Tom Young were among thousands of Allied troops who dropped off at Java, where the British shortly surrendered them to the Japanese.

From Java, John was a prisoner in the infamous Changi Prison, where he was grouped in a force under the command of Edward "Weary" Dunlop. After some time this group were transferred to the Thai-Burma railway construc-



The garage at 177-185 Argyle Street that was purchased by John Souter in the 1940s. Here the garage is owned by DJ Keane in the 1920s with the Crown Hotel next door and the Show Hall Pavilion in the distance without its current frontage. The forces of motoring and Interwar modernism combine with a frontage on the Hume Highway. (Camden Images)

tion where they worked mostly in the Hintok area near Hellfire Pass. On one occasion when John had horrific tropical sores on his legs and was confined to hospital, the Japanese were getting desperate to complete the railway, and were going to the jungle hospitals and selecting patients who they deemed were healthy enough to work. They approached John and ordered him to get out of bed. Doctor 'Weary' Dunlop then stood between the armed guards and John, saying "this man will not work today". After a standoff, the guards relented and John stayed in bed. This was typical of the way Dunlop looked after his men during the horrific conditions in the camps.

When the railway was completed, John and thousands of other prisoners were taken by train back to Singapore, where many returned to Changi. However, great numbers, including John and Tom Young, were transferred by broken down old ships to Japan to work as slave labour. These ships should have flown the Red Cross, but the Japanese refused, and many were torpedoed by American submarines, thinking they were carrying Japanese soldiers back to Japan. Hundreds of prisoners lost their lives to these attacks.



Souter's Garage at 177-185 Argyle Street in 1965 under renovation. The Crown Hotel on the left of the image. The former Interwar garage is being replaced by a new car showroom - mid-20th century modernism in Camden. (T Souter)

However, John and Tom made it to Japan where they worked at a town Saganaseki, at times in coal mines and steelworks. In 1945 when the atomic bombs were dropped, John was only 30 miles away from Nagasaki.

After repatriation, the Australians returned home by ship to Sydney in 1946. Before the war John had courted two sisters who lived nearby in Ashfield, but he found they had since married. However, their younger sister Nona was still living at home with her mother and younger brother. John and Nona married in 1948, and John also received a War Service Loan, which he intended to spend on buying a business.

John remembered his days as a scout travelling through Camden. There had been a garage in Argyle St next to the Crown Hotel that had always caught his interest, so he travelled to Camden with the intention of purchasing the garage, which he was able to do.



Renovation and rebuilding of the old Souter's Garage resulted in a modern car showroom in 1974 at 177-185 Argyle Street. The business was now operating as John Souter Pty Ltd and was the International and Toyota dealerships with a second-hand car division next door. The forces of mid-20th century modernism caught up with the former Interwar garage. (T Souter)

His next problem was convincing new bride Nona into moving from the city to the country, which she was reluctant to do. In 1948, they moved to Camden and purchased a small cottage at 1 Gilbulla Ave, just down from the Camden Hospital.

The garage at 177-185 Argyle St, had previously sold used cars and had a petrol bowser on the front footpath. The dairy industry was thriving around Camden, and John saw the opportunity to sell tractors and farm machinery to the farmers. He was able to establish an International Harvester dealership, which he later expanded to include trucks.

After the war, there was a huge demand for coal and although Ern Clinton and Stan Fox were creating their own fleets of trucks to haul coal out of the Kangaroo Valley, there was further demand for privately owned coal trucks. The garage, now known as John Souter Pty Ltd, was able to meet this demand and supplied International trucks to hundreds of contract drivers during

the 1960s and 1970s.

There was also a huge demand for petrol and oil products, but rather than expand on the single bowser John had on the main street, he opened a fuel and oil distributorship at the back of the garage.

This became a burgeoning part of the business, as John was able to gain contracts supplying diesel fuel and oil to all of the coal mines at Nattai and Oakdale.

He also created Mobil petrol and diesel deliveries to the dairy farms and for many years, supplied products to farms from Bargo through Picton, Oakdale and Camden then north to Kemps Creek.

In 1965, the business was offered to take on a Japanese car franchise; some irony here considering the treatment John would have received as a Japanese POW. However, Camden gained a Toyota dealership, and a great number of local people purchased new and used Toyotas from John Souter.

By now, John and Nona had built a new family home in Luker St, Elderslie. With their three children, Anne, Tony and Penny, they moved into a quite large 4 bedroom home made of the new product Besser Brick. A swimming pool was installed in 1965 and many local Camden people enjoyed parties and a swim at the Souter home.

John was a founding member of the Camden Apex, Lions and Rotary clubs, quite an impressive feat, as these fine service clubs established themselves in the Camden Area. John was also a long term active member of the Camden Bowling Club.

However, he loved his business and family and devoted most of his time to them. In 1975, both International and Toyota were placing demands on John to expand the business, but he resisted and gave up both the franchises.

He sold the property in Argyle St, and it became Bryan's Furniture. John had retained the Mobil fuel distributorship and purchased a property in Narellan where he continued to serve the local coal and dairy industries, and also delivered the extremely popular heating oil in Camden and Campbelltown.

John retired in 1977 after serving the local community for nearly 30 years.

His wife Nona and children lived in the area, and they are survived by a very large number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In February 2018, Nona turned 95, and celebrated with her late daughter Anne's children and families, son Tony, his children and families, and daughter Penny and her daughter.

Nona still lives independently in Elderslie and recently renewed her unrestricted driving licence.



The view today at 177-185 Argyle Street Camden on the former site of Souter's Garage with the Crown Hotel at the rear of the image. (GView)

Camden and Wollondilly LGA Rivalry, a view

Lynette Styles

When I was a councillor on Wollondilly Council in the nineties, a battle existed between the two organisations. Camden was seen as the greedy neighbour consorting with state government for a boundary variation of Wollondilly borders, and the sitting mayors were fiercely combative towards each other.

That Herculean mountain Razorback is the divide between Camden and Wollondilly. Protectionism abounds, but once over that mountain, there is a disparate ideology operating.

Residents at the foot of Razorback in Mt Hunter, Cawdor, Camden South may possess information about Camden outside the Shire in which they live. Once over the mountain, little to nothing is known of political issues in Camden and the same juxtaposition operates in Wollondilly.

Camden sought the inclusion of Cawdor within its local government area. Even though they did not obtain consent, the issue fermented quietly, like a tickle in the throat turning into a cough.

The question is whether Cawdor should form part of Camden Council. The hierarchy on Wollondilly Shire Council would be rattled by the question, but let's look at the issue from an historical perspective.

In 1805, John Macarthur was granted 5000 acres at the Cowpastures for sheep farming. He named the location Camden. In 1812, an area named Cawdor by Governor Lachlan Macquarie became a government cattle station on the Cowpastures Government Reserve

Incorporated into the Macarthur holdings, the Cawdor land was opened to tenant farmers by the time Camden was subdivided in 1840. Four decades later, a movement of Camden residents called for the creation of a municipal council and the first meeting was held in 1889.

In 1906, Wollondilly Shire Council was created and the boundary lines drawn up by the government incorporating a huge area from Yanderra, Appin, Menangle, Oakdale, Mt Hunter and all the land known as Cawdor at the foot of Razorback.

From an historical viewpoint, the land belonged to Camden long before it was ever incorporated within the Wollondilly LGA.

