

## Mount Annan

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Mount Annan is one of the newer suburbs on Sydney's south-west urban fringe, the traditional lands of the Dharawal and Gundungurra people. Mount Annan is located in the south-eastern part of the Camden Local Government Area. In 2001 Mount Annan had a population of 6,761, and which was an 85 per cent increase from 1996. The demographic profile of Mount Annan is predominantly young families, with 35 per cent of the population under 18 years of age.

The northern boundary of Mount Annan is Narellan Road, on the west the suburb is demarcated by the ridge line running from Narellan Road in a southerly direction to Jacks Gully Waste Management Facility and the Nepean River, the boundary then follows a line east to the summit of Mt Annan and the M5, which is the eastern boundary. The suburb is bounded on the north by Currans Hill, in the west by Narellan Vale and new area of Spring Farm, and in the south by Gilead and Menangle Park.

Mount Annan is the name given to a high point in the western part of the locality and is 190 metres above sea level. It only appears on published maps after 1834. This point was part of *Glenlee* which was owned by William Howe, who built a fine Georgian house (1824) on the property. There were extensive vistas from the house which took in the Nepean River floodplain to the west, and Mount Annan immediately to the north. The Howes (William and his wife Mary) came from Annan, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, with its gently undulating hills, similar to the terrain on *Glenlee*, was steeped in romantic folklore.

*Glenlee* was acquired by James Fitzpatrick in the 1850s and his descendants ran it as a dairy farm until 1978 with associated cropping and grazing. Parts of the Glenlee estate were designated for housing development, while some was designated open space as Scenic Protection Zone by the Macarthur Development Board (some of which was to make up part of the Mount Annan Botanic Garden).

The first land release for housing at Mount Annan was in late 1980s and following the State Planning Authority's *Structure Plan* (1973) Landcom became the owner and planner-developer of these estates. The main focus of this development was housing accessibility and affordability, therefore housing was low density, detached housing for first home buyers and low income families. Public housing was scattered throughout the estate. Some families came from the local area and Campbelltown, while others moved from Menai and Sutherland. These were often single income families who had large mortgages through Homefund, a state government initiative to assist low income households to buy their first home. The scheme was eventually abandoned as interest rates increased, the recession of the early 1990s took hold and Homefund participants fell into arrears and lost their homes.

Later land releases such as Garden Gates were aimed at second and third home buyers and Landcom changed from providing subsidised land to a profit making government enterprise. Garden Gates was first released in 1995 and was a greenfield, infill site between the original

Mount Annan land releases and Mount Annan Botanic Gardens. Restrictive covenants were attached to land sales to maintain a certain type of housing, there were small parks and the name 'Garden Gates' was taken from the botanic gardens to give a certain panache. All aimed at creating community pride and identity. Sociologist Gabrielle Gwyther from UWS Bankstown, who has studied this estate, describes the residents as middle class families Australian born of Anglo-Christian background with white collar or service jobs in single cottages with a large mortgage. She refers to them as petit-bourgeoisie (self-employed contractors and tradesmen) who, she maintains, believe that hard work rather going to university was the way to success.

Other land releases have included: Domain Gardens (2004), The Cascades (1999), Sunrise Estate (2004) and Heritage Heights (2005). Of these the largest release has been The Cascades with 506 lots developed by the Bradman Corporation.

The population growth encouraged the establishment of new shopping facilities, which are based around the Mount Annan Marketplace. It opened in 2001 with 10 retail outlets, including a large supermarket and in 2005 it was extended by 4000 square metres and 52 car parking spaces. Adjacent to this is the Mount Annan Shopping Village, which opened in 2002 and had 13 retail outlets by 2005. The shopping precinct also has four fast food outlets, a hotel, a discount supermarket outlet and a service station. In 2007 a further addition to the retail precinct (Mount Annan Central) was approved of 4600 square metres, 15 specialty shops and a 224 space car park providing 187 jobs.

Other facilities that have appeared in response to the growth of the area have included the Mount Annan Leisure Centre opened in 2001 and has a 10 lane 25 metre heated lap pool, leisure pool, hydrotherapy pool, spa, sauna, gymnasium and kiosk. It has over 350,000 visitors a year, cost \$9 million, employs 80 people and is the home of the Mt Annan Swimming Club.

Mount Annan Primary School was the first school to open in 1993 with 160 pupils and by 2003 had 850. The Mount Annan Christian Life Centre opened in 1989 on Narellan Road and church opened the Mt Annan Christian College in 1998, which by 2001 had 340 students. Elizabeth Macarthur High School (1997) was the first high school to open in the locality is located in Waterworth Drive, and named after one of the founding women of the colony of New South Wales, and the wife of John Macarthur of *Camden Park*. {link here} Mount Annan High School, the second high school in the locality, was opened in 2003 with 20 staff and 162 Year 7 students on six hectares of land. In 2007 it had 705 students.

The Mount Annan Botanic Garden is the highlight of the suburb. It is a native plant botanic garden and arboretum in an attractive garden and parkland setting and is managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust. The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney {link here} wanted a native plant nursery from 1912 and officially acquired the site in 1984. The first plantings were made in 1985. It was opened by Duke and Duchess of York in 1988 and was a New South Wales Government Bicentennial project. The site was part of the Glenlee estate and was a dairy farm until 1978. During the late 1970s and 1980s the garden site was used as a riding school on land leased from the Macarthur Development Board. It is Australia's

biggest botanic garden and the most popular tourist attraction in south-western Sydney attracting over 90,000 visitors a year. It has many themed native gardens including stands of endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland. It covers 416 hectares, has over 50 paid staff and volunteers and is the nursery for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. The garden also features outdoor sculptures, walking tracks, lakes, picnic facilities, café and restaurant, garden shop and nursery. It provides many educational services and hosts many major events. The garden is a refuge for rare and endangered species and conducts seed collection and propagation, for example the Wollemi Pine and the Camden White Gum.

On the eastern side of the Mount Annan Botanic Gardens is a little piece of history which was constructed in 1880. It is a water canal (aqueduct) which is partly made of sandstone blocks thought to be quarried from Mount Annan. When it was constructed more than 1000 men were employed on the project and the entire length of the canal was dotted with tented construction camps. The only mode of transport was by horse. It is part of the Upper Nepean Scheme which supplies water by gravity from the dams on upper Nepean River to Prospect Reservoir along a course of 62 km. Until Warragamba Dam {link here} was finished in 1960 this canal supplied most of Sydney's water.

## References

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