

Spring Farm

Ian Willis

Spring Farm is one of the newer suburbs on the south-western rural-urban interface of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. It is part of the traditional lands of the Dharawal and Gundungurra people. Spring Farm is surrounded by Elderslie to the north, Narellan Vale to the northeast, Mount Annan to the east and South Camden in the south. In 2006 the population of the Spring Farm was 287 predominantly made up of young families with 44 per cent of the population under 25 years of age. The suburb will be subject to an increasing number of new arrivals.

Spring Farm is predominantly located on the northern floodplain of the Nepean River, where the river forms the southern boundary of the suburb. The westerly flowing river turns northerly in a sweeping bend and creates a picturesque scene from the hills which rise off the floodplain. The Camden Bypass makes up the northern boundary of Spring Farm, while the boundaries to the northeast follow a series of low ridges between Spring Farm and Narellan Vale and Mt Annan.

Spring Farm covers the southern section of John Oxley's land grant of *Elderslie* (1816) (later *Elderslie*) of 400 acres and the south-western section of William Howe's grant of *Eskdale* (1818) of 1214 acres, which was later known as *Glenlee*. There were also nine land grants to smallholders along the floodplain in the western area of Spring Farm (out of a total of 13 small grants in this area). They ranged in size from 40 acres to 100 acres. The most famous of these smallholders was Thomas Galvin who, according to Alan Atkinson, had accumulated 270 acres in the local area by 1828 and his house was the focal point for Catholic worship up to the 1830s. Atkinson makes the point (in his book *Camden*) that by the end of the 1820s the remainder of these independent farmers had been wiped out by 'combined forces of free enterprise and drought' (p.30).

Spring Farm has had a long history of industrial, mining and agriculture activity. In the early part of the 20th century (1930s-1970s) there were extensive orchards and vineyards along Springs Road and the adjacent floodplain of the Nepean River. They were a mixture of stone fruit, apples and grapes.

One of principal land uses has been the production of poultry: chickens for eggs, and both chicken and turkeys for meat. The Tegal family were one of the major operators from the 1950s where, according to the *Camden Advertiser*, they owned eight farms and a breeder hatchery. During the 1970s and 1980s they supplied most of the breeding stocks for Inghams, one of Australia's largest poultry producers. Tegels exported to China, Fiji, New Zealand, New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Other poultry producers included Neville Clinton who owned a turkey farm in the area for over 30 years. The heritage of poultry farming is remembered in the area as several street names carry the name of chicken breeds include Bantam, Freerange, Cockerel, Dorset and poultry producers including Tegel and Ingham. Camden Council has had a policy of encouraging themed street names in new suburbs, for example, Australian native plants in Narellan Vale.

There has been industrial land use in the area from the early 20th century (before Camden township was connected to town sewerage) the area along Springs Road was used for the dumping and treatment of night soil. There has been extensive sand mining along The Nepean River floodplain for the Sydney building industry, an activity which still continues operation adjacent to the river. Spring Farm has been subject to gas exploration and low pressure gas extraction from coal seam gas. One of the principal industrial activities has been Jacks Gully waste disposal facility which has landfill and a large recycling

centre. For many years Springs Road was used for heavy vehicle access to the Glenlee industrial area, which in the past was a major coal washing and loading facility. Currently the site is a collection point for garden organics from regional councils' kerbside collection programmes and processes greenwaste and organic materials. These industrial and mining landuses have not been without conflict in the past and may pose challenges for users, residents and government in the future as the number of new residents adjacent to these activities increases over time.

The first urban development in Spring Farm in an otherwise rural setting was in the Ettlesdale Road area in the 1960s. The most recent urban development in Spring Farm comprises a series of urban villages according to the local environmental plan developed by Camden Council. The area is planned to have around 3900 housing lots with three separate developers, the Cornish Group with 1100 lots, Landcom 1400 lots and Mirvac, 450 lots. The first estate was opened in 2007 off Richardson Road

Spring Farms also consists of a number of bushland corridors which are located along the floodplain and predominantly along the northeast boundary. The bush corridors are linked between William Howe Reserve and Gundungurra Reserve with the Nepean River. They are made up of the endangered ecological communities which include Elderslie Banksia Scrub Forest and Cumberland Plain Woodland. The western end of Spring Farm along the floodplain is an identified cultural landscape within the broader rural environment along the Nepean Rive floodplain where there are significant vistas across the floodplain and views to the Blue Mountains and Razorback Range.

Further reading

Alan Atkinson, *Camden, Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988.