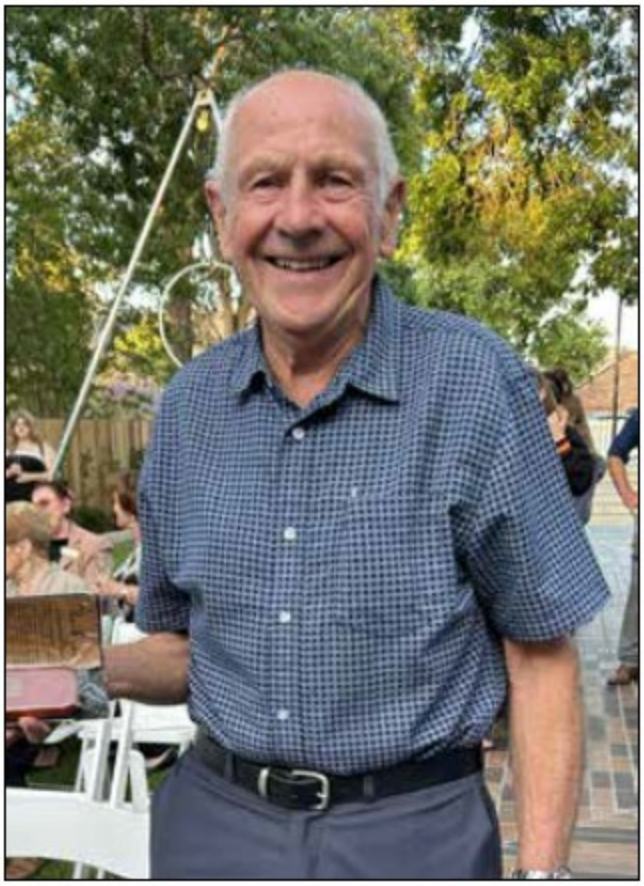
CAMDEN HISTORY

Journal of the Camden Historical Society



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Editor: Dr Ian Willis OAM

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Society contact:
P.O. Box 566, Camden, NSW 2570. Online <http://www.camdenhistory.org.au>

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Meetings are held at 7.00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month except in January. They are held in the Museum. Visitors are always welcome.

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The Museum is located at 40 John Street, Camden, phone 4655 3400. 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 secretary <secretary@camdenhistory.org.au>.

Disclaimer
The views expressed by authors in journal articles are solely those of the authors and not necessarily endorsed by the Camden Historical Society.

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Front Cover Image: Daryl Sidman at the re-opening of the Camden Civic Centre 2025 (I Willis)

Back Cover Image: Camden Men's Shed in 2024 (W Sims)

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Daryl Sidman, 2026 Camden Citizen of the Year

Kellee Cordina

Congratulations to Daryl Sidman, who received the prestigious honour of being named 2026 Camden Citizen of the Year, presented at the Australia Day Awards Ceremony held at Camden Civic Centre on Friday 23rd January.

Daryl is the true definition of a quiet achiever — a humble and dedicated individual who has selflessly served his community for over 50 years. His decades of volunteer service have made a lasting impact on many local organisations, most notably the Camden Show Society, and in more recent years, the Camden Men's Shed and Macarthur Woodturners.



Daryl receiving award from Mayor Fedeli 2026 (Brett Atkins)



A young Daryl Sidman in 1950. At the time his father, Ralph, worked for Souters as a truck motor mechanic and drove this vehicle. (K Cordina)

The Sidman name has been prominent in Camden since the early settlement days. Daryl's great-grandparents, William and Honor Sidman, travelled from England to Australia in 1888 aboard the *SS Coptic* with their seven children. Around 1893, the family arrived in Camden, settling on a farm known as 'Bickley Vale' on the outskirts of town. Soon after, in 1894, they purchased the 'Camden Times' from Mr A.J. Doust. The family then moved into John Street, Camden, and the paper was later renamed the 'Camden News'. Under their leadership, it became a prominent and trusted publication within the district.

Born in 1948 to parents Ralph and Mavis Sidman, Daryl grew up in Camden in the well-known and respected family. Many locals fondly recall purchasing vehicles from his father, Ralph, a car salesman at Clintons Motors in Camden.

After completing his schooling, Daryl entered the floor covering trade and, together with his wife Kay, established D.R. Sidman & Co. They operated the successful business for over 55 years while raising their two children, Glen and Kerry.

In the mid-1980s, Daryl went on to specialise in synthetic grass installations. His expertise was soon in high demand both nationally and internationally, including projects linked to Olympic-level sporting facilities — most notably



Sports Group Industry Award received by Daryl in 2025. (K.Sidman).

the surface for the hockey pitch at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. In May 2025, Daryl and Kay were invited to attend the Sport Group Asia Pacific's 'Annual Agents Conference' in Vietnam, where Daryl was presented with an industry contribution award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the sports surfacing industry.

Outside of business, Daryl has demonstrated unwavering dedication to community service. He has been an active member of the Camden Show Committee since 1976, with this year marking his 50th year of service. For an extraordinary 47 years he has served as chief steward of the pavilion section — a role requiring year-round planning and preparation, followed by weeks of on-site work before, during and after the show. From organising displays to managing pack-up and clean-up, Daryl's tireless efforts help ensure the Show continues to be one of Camden's most loved annual events.

Daryl has dedicated himself to growing the pavilion into a vibrant showcase of both tradition and innovation, including the introduction of new sections such as sugar art, home brew and 3D printing, while continuing his championing of arts, crafts and cooking. His leadership and vision saw the pavilion



Camden Show Left to right: David Dunbier (Camden Show President), Kay Sidman and Daryl Sidman (Brett Atkins)

reach a record 3,625 entries in 2025, with more than 40 per cent coming from young people, reflecting his commitment to engage and inspire the next generation. In 2025, Daryl received recognition for his outstanding dedication to the Camden Show Society, by his nomination as a finalist for the AgShows NSW Living Legend Awards.



Daryl at the re-opening of the Camden Civic Centre on 6th November 2025 with commemorative pen (Kellee Cordina)

Daryl was also actively involved with the Camden South Scout Association for a number of years and served as president for a three-year term. During this time, he was instrumental in fundraising for improvements to the scout hall, including the lining of the roof and a complete repaint of the interior.

Daryl's involvement with the Camden Men's Shed since October 2022 further reflects his generosity and commitment to supporting the local community. The Camden Men's Shed now operates from its new purpose-built shed at Ferguson Lane, Grasmere, providing a safe, friendly and active environment where men can socialise, work on projects such as woodworking, welding and gardening, and contribute to community support initiatives.

A keen woodturner and member of the Macarthur Woodturners group, Daryl was recently entrusted with a special task as part of the Camden Civic Centre revamp project — transforming reclaimed coachwood timber panelling from the original 1982 civic centre into handcrafted timber pens. These unique keepsakes were gifted to guests at the official opening of the newly refurbished Camden Civic Centre on 6th November 2025, preserving an important



Australia Day Award 2026 Left to right: Kerry Searle, Kay Sidman, Daryl Sidman and Glen Sidman (Brett Atkins)

piece of Camden's history through Daryl's craftsmanship and creativity.

Beyond his own volunteer commitments, Daryl has also worked quietly behind the scenes for more than twenty-five years supporting his wife, Kay, in her extensive Cancer Council fundraising efforts. Assisting with events, logistics and preparation, their teamwork has contributed to raising vital funds for cancer research and support services. Kay's outstanding contribution to the Cancer Council, raising $336,886 to date, has also been recognised through her nomination for an Australia Day award.

Daryl is a humble volunteer whose steadfast commitment and extraordinary service over five decades make him a most deserving recipient of the honour of being named the 2026 Camden Citizen of the Year. His quiet leadership, generosity of spirit and unwavering dedication to the Camden community exemplify the very best of community service. Through his actions, Daryl continues to inspire others and strengthen the sense of pride and connection that makes Camden such a special place to live.

Spin Out 2026 Rock ’N Roll Festival, a first

Ian Willis

The three-day Camden Spin Out 2026 Rock ’N Roll Festival is the first of its kind in the local area, themed around the 1950s and 1960s across a number of venues in the town centre.

The three-day festival was centred on a rock ’n roll dance hall at the civic centre with ‘twist, jive and boogie’. Dancing was led by a variety of live bands on sessions on Friday and Saturday nights, all sold out with 248 participants, and. Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon. This was supplemented by ‘Jukebox Jive’ sessions on Saturday afternoon. Swing dance lessons were offered to beginners, with dance competitions for the advanced.

The Estate featured Damien Leith on Friday night with ‘Presents Roy Orbison and friends’, followed by a storytelling history panel on Saturday morning (see journal article) and tours of historic Dr Crookston’s house.



Promotion for the first Camden Spin Out 2026 Rock ‘N Roll Festival (Camden Village)



Dance Hall at the Camden Civic Centre with the band The Hellcat III playing swing music during a set with dancers jiving and boogie-woogie. (I Willis 2026)

The centre of action on Saturday was a Spin Out car show of 80 classic cars from the 1950s and 1960s, with prizes awarded in the afternoon to best presented, best in class and a host of other awards. The Camden Historical Society featured a history display in the galleria of the museum library complex (see journal article). Market stalls appeared in a number of locations throughout the festival.

Across the Camden town centre ten other venues including hotels, clubs and bars offered a range of themed entertainment over the weekend.

The organising committee was led by Camden Village Coordinator Melissa Musgrave, supported by the Spin Out subcommittee, who worked tirelessly over the festival. The festival committee even encouraged young Camdenites training in event management to be involved in running sessions.

The festival would not have happened without the support of sponsors and media partners.

Many positive comments were received from visitors and the whole festival had a positive vibe.

The event promotional material states:

> ‘This event has been shaped by our community and stands as a power ful example of what can be achieved when local passion, partnership and place-based pride come together.’ (Festival Guide)



Classic car show in John Street on Saturday morning for Spin Out 2026 (I Willis)



A photo-op for the organisers of Spin Out 2026 at the Friday night dance hall event. (I Willis)

Spin Out 2026

This is Your Life, Camden Village – A unique panel on storytelling about Camden in the 1950s

Venue: The Estate, Camden.
Date: Saturday, 21 February 2026
Moderator - Dianne Smith
Audience: 38
Participants - Joy Riley, Alan Rapley, David McDonald, Helen (Smith) Williams, Neta (Pinkerton) Holyoake, Lonnie Lee

Introduction

This Is Your Life - Camden 2026 panel was held to hear stories straight from the people who lived them in the two decades 1950-1960. As part of the 'Spin Out Rock 'N Roll Festival 2026', the panel sparked memories, shared history, and most of all entertained.

Joy Riley

Joy is 88 years old and was born in the private maternity hospital, Wellborne Oxley Street. 'We lived at 66 John Street, Camden. My sister was born in the house on our dining room table. The grandson said he would not eat off that table again.'

Joy's father was Jack Dunk, who went to WW2. He was part of the 9th Division and was part of the 'Rats of Tobruk'. He came home in November 1942. He sent lots of pictures from overseas and letters from the front.

'Dad's job was a mechanic and owned a garage at Picton to 1939. He carted wheat at Grenfell. He had a market garden in Chellaston Street. He had a shop selling rotary hoes in Camden and ploughed the paddock for the Chinese market garden. In 1949 Dad bought the fruit shop next door to Wrenches Shoes. Furners were on the left hand side. The shop was open from 1949 to 1960.'

'I went to school at Camden Public School. I walked to school down past the court house. The convent was on the opposite side of the road, We never walked past the convent. The rumour was that if you see a nun you had to touch a button. June Dixon was my best friend. Mr Bowen was my favourite school teacher. We repeated 6th class because we liked our teacher so much. We had a 40-year school reunion. I did homework in the shop on the tables.'

'The shop was open from 9am to 11pm. It was a milk bar. I worked in the shop. When the shop closed, I was 22 years old. I worked on the site of Haf-



History Panel at Spin Out 2026. Joy Riley, Dianne Smith, Alan Rapley. (I Willis 2026)

fendon and Henderson that became Rodney's grocers shop until 1966. It was self-service.'

'Mum shopped at Cliftons. She would give a list to the salesperson and it was delivered to home. She put an order into Tildsley, a butcher shop order and it was delivered to home.'

The RSL hall. Dad was president of Camden RSL Sub-Branch. The hall was from the Narellan Army Camp and transport to Oxley Street. Dances were held in the hall and Mrs Kelloway provided the music playing the piano. There was the Floral Ball. There was a dance every Friday night. There was Frank Goonan on the drums. The band was piano, sax and drums.

'On Saturdays I would go with my father on a fruit run to Spring Creek and then rush to get back at 2pm for the movies. Dawn Howlett had a hamburger shop and married Ron Shoesmith from the cake shop. My sister married Col Sheppard. Alan Rapley's grandmother and Joy Riley's grandmothers were Dunks.'

Alan Rapley

Alan's mother was one of eleven children. His father was one of eight children. Alan's family was from Werombi and he was born in Sunshine Maternity Hospital run by Matron Heise in Murray Street where Centrelink is today.



Spin Out 2026 History Panel. Helen Williams, David McDonald, Neta Holyoake, and Dianne Smith (I Willis 2026)

Alan lived 16 Oxley Street Camden. On the Tildsley butcher side down from McAleers garage. There were several houses including the Chalkers.

Alan's father had a 'house cow' in the stockyard that he milked. His mother made butter. 'Mum kept the cream'. Dad went to milk the cow and 'a bloke had cut the wire on the gate to let the cow out'. The matter was resolved the old fashioned way with fists. It was to go before the court but the opposing chap realised his error. As a child Alan would play under the RSL hall.

The RSL hall had debutante balls that always included a pair of junior partners. Alan accompanied a little girl in this capacity. He had to wear a suit. The Education Department resumed Oxley Street when Alan was in 6th Class at Camden Public School. The family moved to Alpha Road.

Alan got a job as a paper boy. The first route was worth 25/- and went down Harrington Street to Hume Highway at Narellan. Alan started a 5.30am. He rolled around 60 newspapers on the '25 bob job'. He got the '30 bob job' with 90 papers that went up John Street, Broughton Street, the bottom of town and back to Alpha Road. Alan broke a decorative window that surrounded the impressive front door at Dr Crookston's house throwing the newspaper and still retained his job. He used his pocket money for movies and sport.

Alan was a member of the YA (Young Anglicans) at St Johns Church. 'You

brought a plate'. They had Friday nights' dances in the parish hall and outings. For sport Alan played rugby league for Camden Junior Rugby League Club in 1963. He later played rugby union for Petersham Rugby Union team until he broke his leg.

Alan's first job was an apprentice electrician with Keith Sharpe £6/16/6 per year. The apprenticeship was five years. In 1968 he got tradesman's wages $50 and moved to the Burragorang mines. Alan worked at Valley No 1 mine for six years. The seam was 3'6" to 6' and you moved like a crab. There was 'Ah holes' where you could stand up where there had been a fall. There were 8 hour shifts and in the 1970s 35 hour week. The meal break was 30 minutes. The crew was 12 men, nine labourers, one foreman, and two tradesmen. In the breaks the tradesmen would service the equipment. There was a helmet lamp and battery for light.

Chellaston Street 'mob' - David McDonald, Helen (Smith) Williams, Neta (Pinkerton) Holyoake

David McDonald

David lived at 4 Chellaston Street, which was the last street going out to Camden Park Estate. The rest was all paddocks.

David was born in Oxley Street in 1939 at Nurse Taplin's Maternity Hospital. David would catch rabbits with a trap. Set the trap in the afternoon and collect them in the next morning. He would skin rabbit and sell to his neighbours.

At Camden Public School he remembers the arrival of a pony trap and the three Macarthur Onslow girls got out. Phoebe, Annette (Neta) and Pamela. Their home was Macquarie Grove. They would be picked up in the afternoon.

There was a 'swimming hole' called 'Little Sandy' at the bottom of Chellaston Street. Merve Jenson set up a swimming club and we had swimming races. When the Nepean River was in flood we would get some logs upstream and push them into the river and ride them down to Little Sandy. We did not discuss this activity with our families.

David's father died and the family lived with grandmother, who was a Pinkerton. There was an incident. Terry and David McD had air rifles. Terry accidently shot me in the eye in 1951 and I was off school for 4 months.

We were friendly with boys from Belgenny (Home Farm). There were 5 boys and 4 horses. The boys would take the horses from Camden Park and return

them at the end of the day. Alec Thomas was the farm manager. Mrs Macarthur Stanham said it was Ok and thanked the boys for exercising the horses. They had thought that no-one knew that they had borrowed the horses.

There were dances at the RSL hall on Friday nights. There was the Green Room above Furner Brothers on Thursday nights. Dances were the quickstep, waltz, and progressive barn dance. I was a member of YA (Young Anglicans) at St Johns Church. We would go to the movies; 6-8 boys and girls would go to dances and movies, socialising.

'My mother was a widow and made all our clothes right up until I was 8 years old.' David's haircut was a 'crew cut' but he did not like pointy shoes. 'I had broad feet and they squashed my toes.' Thongs appeared in the 1960s and were called 'Japanese riding boots'.

Movies were at the Empire Theatre in Argyle Street run by the Fox family. Jaz Pinkerton, and David and Neta's grandfather ran the Paramount in Elizabeth Street. There were discussions between the two families and they shut down the Empire. It was a joint decision with the Foxes having half interest in the Paramount. David was the projectionist at the Paramount, which was 'always packed', and it was just a 'basic big shed'. David held hands with different girls every week. He saw the same movie lots of times. He never had to pay. As projectionist David watched movie stars and said 'Elizabeth Taylor was beautiful and a good actress'. Others included Audry Hepburn, Debbie Reynolds and Clarke Gable. Music included Nat King Cole who sang 'Mona Lisa', Bing Crosby, Dean Martin and Perry Como.

David got a job working for Hoyts in the city when he left school. He was then an apprentice fitter and turner, £4/7/6 at Southwells. David worked in the movies then joined the police force in 1963 and spent 5 years in the city, then lived in Campbelltown and Menangle.

At the top of John Street was a 'silent cop', a mini roundabout. There were Chinese gardens on the way into town. A red flag was raised at lunchtime. No-one ever said anything as they wanted to be the first so they could eat the most.

Coal was a 'massive industry in Camden' with extraction and cartage. There were trucks through Camden carted to Narellan, Glenlee, Campbelltown. The number of trucks passing through Camden was 'astronomical' in the 50s and 60s. As a fitter and turner David earned £9/9/6. The coal mines were 3x the wages. David did not want to go underground.



Audience at the History Panel at the Estate for Spin Out 2026. Entertainment was provided by the Hot Potato Band (I Willis 2026)

Neta Holyoake (Pinkerton)

Neta is a cousin of David McDonald. Neta was born at Camden Hospital with Dr Crookston attending because she was a twin, weighing 8lb 4oz. Neta's twin is Nola Tegal (now). The twin girls were named after the four nurses at their delivery, Neta, Elizabeth, Nola, Isobel. The girls have a 2½ years older brother. Cousins David and family lived with Grandmother Pinkerton. Neta's family lived across the street with her maternal grandmother.

Neta never ate food outside the house. The Capital Café was 'so good' with salt and pepper on the table.

Neta's appendix ruptured on the way home from school, and Dr Crookston operated in Camden Hospital. Neta best friend was Jan Rofe. She was 9 months younger than me.

Pinkerton family was not always linked to the movies. Neta's 'Dad was a tailor who could make his own clothes shirts, everything'. Neta's grandmother made all her own clothes including formal dresses.

Sport for Neta was tennis. To get ready you prepared the white tennis skirt and always 'Dunlops'. They were sandshoes that were cleaned with 'Kiwi White'. She took the laces out. As a teenager you 'were always showing the best part' and if the shoes were not dry you would 'wear them wet'.

Little Sandy was a 'nightmare. Neta was taught how to swim by being on a log. She was taught to dog-paddle so she would survive.

Neta's Dad ran a tailor shop with Uncle Arthur in Argyle Street. The shop in 1956 sold radios and moved to TVs. Late 1950s after school Dad told us 'a fellow came into the shop and wanted us to sell his records'. He was Johnny O'Keefe. Neta's Dad did not know who he was. He took the records and sold them.

After the war, there were new fabrics. At Whiteman's you ordered fabric. They cut from the roll and you received 'personalised service'. There were different sections for accessories. There were rope petticoats, there was a cord around the bottom of the skirt and one half way up it. It would swing out and twirl as twirled around. 'You had to have the right knickers because the skirt was up in the air. Some of the things you would do to attract the men. You immerse your cotton petticoat in cold water starch to stiffen it and hang it out to dry. Accessories included a dog collar belt. Shoes had pointy toes and you could get bunions. Nylon was good and it kept its shape. Cotton socks did not stay up and you would say the shoes were "eating your socks." Nylon socks were a great improvement. Fluorescent socks , were an innovation of the Rock 'n Roll era. They were bright pink, bright green and Guy Mitchel blue'.

Neta's mother was a 'stylish woman'. Her brother, Jim, was 'embarrassed by everything we girls did, our parents were not embarrassed'.

Neta's first job was at the Camden paper shop where Robert Campbells Looking Class is now. At 15 years of age, her Dad said she had to get a job. We sold cigarettes, newspapers at the newsagent. At the weekends Neta worked across the road 'making milkshakes too'.

Neta made the point [at the history panel] that you should 'embrace all the moments, especially being here' at the Dr Crookston's House.

Helen Williams

Helen lived at 14 Chellaston Street for 16 years. There were billycarts with the boys starting at the top and she started half-way down the street.

Helen played in the paddocks behind the house that were owned by St Johns Church. Helen reports she 'had a great time and walked across the paddocks to the movies'.

At Little Sandy you could catch eels which were sold to neighbours. Helen recalls that 'eel is horrible' and she could not swim and paddled around in an inner tube of an aeroplane. Helen says that she still cannot swim.

Helen said she had strict parents that did not allow her to go to dances. She wore hat and gloves and neatly dressed when she went to church. She learnt ballroom dancing at Campbelltown that included gipsy tap, barn dance. Helen's older brother got away with a lot of things. Helen's mother would not allow her to wear makeup, 'none'. 'Mum only allowed powder. Rarely went to the movies at night.'

TV came to Camden when Helen was 13 years old. She went to neighbour homes to watch 'Hopalong Cassidy'. There was a TV in 'Mick Brien's shop window'. Helen was born at the Matron Heise private maternity hospital in Murray Street.

Reflection

The panel generated stories of individuals, local culture, and community that shaped Camden as we know it in 2026. The 1950s and 1960s was a time when Camden was bursting with characters, places and events worth telling. Whether you grew up here or are just curious about Camden's past, the organisers hoped that these stories connected, inspired, and brought an era to life again for Camdenites today.

Transcribed and edited for clarity by Ian Willis and reviewed by Marilyn Willis and Dianne Smith.

Editor's note about oral history and storytelling

In the study of memory by psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, historians, anthropologists, genealogists, sociologists and others, they state that the most vivid positive memories recalled by people telling their life stories is from between 15-30 years of age. This is called the 'reminiscence bump'. These observations correspond with the vivid memories of the life stories of the members of the history panel. Their stories recall their youth, the first job, the movies, swimming in the river and more. The panel is a wonderful example of the power of storytelling and oral history, and how its adds layers of meaning to the Camden story.

Camden Museum Showcasing Mid-20th Century Life

Jo O'Brien

Spirit of Camden is a not-for-profit group set up in 2024 by a group of interested locals to promote 'Camden Village' as a vibrant rural tourism destination. Camden Historical Society have been involved from early on with the team, and we have contributed information and presented at various events.

The signature event of the group is the Spin Out Rock 'n Roll Festival, with the inaugural event taking place from 20 to 22 February 2026. Over three days there was a dance hall in the Camden Civic Centre, 1950s and 60s music in various local venues, and other related activities. On Saturday there was a car show in John Street, featuring over 70 vintage cars, with market stalls and music.

With the museum closed for building repairs, we looked for other ways Camden Historical Society could participate in this exciting new event. We



Camden Historical Society display of 1950s and 1960s memorabilia in the galleria for Spinout 2026 (J O'Brien)

decided to "bring the Museum to the people", with displays of items and stories in the Camden Library Galleria. Appropriate items were removed from the collection before it was packed up, and others were found in the school education kit. Members kindly contributed further items from their own collections.



Camden Historical Society display for Spin Out 2026 in the galleria (I Ramsay)

Titled 'Mid-20th Century Life in Camden', we filled two display cases and several story boards. One display included an early 1960s portable record player donated by Leonie, accompanied by her singles vinyl records including several by Elvis Presley. Frances contributed some wonderful memorabilia from the *Smiley* movies, which were filmed at Camden Park in the 1950s, including Harry's autograph book. A lovely collection of toys from the era brought back memories, with teddies, books and games, an early View master, money box, and toy sewing machine - some sourced from the collection, along with many contributed by Leonie and Trish.

A second display comprised museum pieces – a black bakelite telephone, Empire-Corona portable typewriter, and box brownie camera – items once modern and innovative each with their unique purpose. Now all of these items can be replaced by a smart phone in your pocket! Alongside these was a display of nostalgic kitchen items, some museum pieces alongside vintage items from Jo's collection. Memories of burnt toast from the old toaster, accompanied the eggbeaters, cake tins, EPNS spoons, and brightly coloured bowls.

Other displays on story boards featured advertisements and articles from the

Camden News - examples of new and modern refrigerators, appliances, cars, fashion, and homewares from 1954 to 1960 - as well as stories from the Golden Fleece and Festival of Youth Parades, and an early colour brochure from the Rotolactor. This information was all sourced from the CHS archives, Camden Images, Camden News on microfilm (from Camden Area Family History Society), and Trove newspapers.

The old fire station included the colourful Spirit of Camden storyboards – '*Camden 1950s and 1960s Memory Lane - a Pictorial Display'* - with a collection of photographs, many of which were provided by the society from Camden Images.

On the Saturday of the car show there were hundreds of interested people looking at the displays, including locals who had never been to the museum, visitors to Camden, and friends and members of Camden Historical Society. The series of displays flowed well, from the open fire station doors throughout the galleria, with an information table and volunteers on hand to chat to



The Camden Historical Society Mid-Century Life in Camden display in the galleria. Here Dawn Williams is chatting to visitors to the exhibition (J O'Brien)

Camden Historical Society display in the galleria for SpinOut 2026 with society member Jo O'Brien (I Ramsay)



visitors.

Many thanks to the team who brought all of this together, and those who were there on the day: Dianne M, Leonie, Dawn, Trish, Frances, Lee, and myself; as well as Fletcher, Peter, John and Julie for their support, and thank you to Ian R for his great photographs.

We look forward to bringing together more displays for future events, and hope that Spin Out will return bigger and better next year, when we can open the Museum and celebrate the 50s and 60s Rock 'n Roll era.

CHS Three Minute Talk – 'Nipper the Dog'

CHS Meeting 11 February 2026

Frances Warner

The society decided to implement a new section in the meeting a 'Three Minute Talk' on a history subject. The third talk was very interesting and given by Frances Warner at the society meeting on 11 February 2026. The first talk was by president Peter Riordan, 'Murrandah's breastplate', and the second by Leonie Jackson, was 'Gas street lights in Camden'. The subject of Frances's talk was 'Nipper the Dog'.

Nipper is to be found on the records of His Master's Voice Recording and



Frances Warner giving her expert knowledge on HMV's Nipper the Dog at the society's February meeting. (I Willis 2026)

Gramophone Company. Nipper the Dog was a white-and-brown painted plaster model used for advertising.

Nipper was a real dog. A stray. A mixed-breed Jack Russell fox terrier cared for by Mark Henry Barrand (1811-1874) Nipper was a male terrier born in Bristol, United Kingdom, in 1884. After Mark's death, his brother Francis, a well-known English artist, looked after Nipper. Francis produced dozens of paintings of Nipper, his ear cocked to the sound of a wind-up disc gramophone. Nipper is best known as the trademark for RCA Victor, EMI and now His Master's Voice.

Nipper died in 1895 at the age of 10, and his resting place is in Clarence Street, Kingston Upon Thames, United Kingdom, under a mulberry tree. In 2010, a short road near his resting place was officially named 'Nipper Alley'.

Frances recalls that she and Harry bought a Victrola Talking Machine made in New Jersey, USA, in 1977 for $360 from an antique shop on Argyle Street in Camden. The talking machines were designed for an 'affluent home', and the cabinets have a high-end furniture look. Record storage is in the lower section. You changed the player's volume by adjusting the doors: low (2 doors closed), medium (1 door closed), loud (2 doors open). They bought records from Bernie Burn Auctions at Narellan and now have around 100 78rpm records. They include Peter Dawson, an Australian bass baritone, Dame Nellie Melba, an Australian soprano, and Slim Dusty, a country musician.



HMV Nipper Record Label (Camden Museum)

From Fountain to Flagpole: the changing face of a roundabout

Dianne Matterson

The current roundabout – a mundane piece of street design – sits as a silent sentinel over what has passed before. As hundreds of motorists pass through the John and Argyle Street intersection on a daily basis, many are oblivious to the significant occasions or events that have taken place on this spot over the last century. What began as the site at which the town water supply was turned on in 1899, later became the location of an emotional memorial to a dead loved one, before evolving into a functional, but vital, part of Camden's traffic management system.

In February 1913, Frances Lilian Faithful Anderson wrote to the Mayor, expressing her desire to present a memorial fountain to the municipality for the benefit of the Camden public and in memory of her husband, William Hugh Anderson who had died in 1912. Camden Council accepted the offer and suggested that provision also be made for water for dogs. The council met and discussed the best site for the fountain and decided that the centre of the John and Argyle Street intersection was the optimum location. They also wanted a gas lamp included on the top of the structure.[1]

The Water and Sewerage Board agreed to provide the water for free, and the Board of Health recommended copper water basins. Walter Peters was granted permission from Camden Council to excavate in Argyle Street for the installation of the monument. After the 'handsome' fountain – with a gas lamp at the top – was mounted in the centre of the John and Argyle Street intersection, Mrs. Anderson was pleased with the result: "May I express a hope that this fountain may prove a blessing to many a thirsty soul, and so be a fitting memento of the sympathy which the late Mr. W.H. Anderson had for all fellow creatures." The fountain was 2.26m high and 1.87m wide and provided light by night, as well as water for the public and a trough for dogs. It was sculpted from Pyrmont sandstone by Walter Peters, stood on an octagonal stone base and had nickel taps, while the memorial inscription was in gilded letters.[2]

Runaway disaster

About 6 p.m. one evening in 1914, two runaway horses owned by Mr. A. Lavercombe from The Oaks knocked over the Anderson fountain. Mr. Lavercombe was outside Whiteman Bros. store and was making preparations to leave for home in his waggonette, when one of the horses lashed out at him with both hind feet, kicking him so forcefully that he fell backwards, jerking



Photo 1 – Anderson Fountain in 1920 (Camden Images)

the reins as he did. The horses sped off in a direct line with the fountain. Each horse veered to opposite sides of the fountain and it was knocked over by the pole connecting the horses together, causing significant damage to the fountain and severing both the water and gas pipes. Fortunately, while the wooden pole between the horses was damaged, the horses escaped injury.[3]

At the following Camden Council meeting, the repairs to the fountain were discussed. An expensive estimate of £18 had been received for the reconstruction of the structure as there was a significant amount of work involved. The main block and the bowl were damaged so both needed to be reduced in size in order to cut out the broken sections. This would also involve '17 dozen' letters being recut and regilded, while the gas and water pipes needed to be re-laid. It was estimated it would take 8 days to complete the repairs.[4]

Camden Gas Company designed a new lamp for the top of the memorial fountain. Camden Council asked for a full costing of the work involved. The gas company informed the council that the cost of the copper lamps and decorative bracket originally agreed to was £13/5/-. This included a £5 bracket, two lamps £8/5/-, (minus the £5/5/- that was the value of the two lamps previously installed), leaving the council with an £8 bill. The gas company was willing to provide the required labour at no charge. This £8 cost was considered unreasonable by the council and they asked the gas company to install a street lamp at a point of the council's choosing, which under the terms of the

contract between the council and the gas company, would cost the council nothing. However, this solution proved to be unsuitable, so, in the end, a compromise was reached: the council would sanction the installation of an upright lantern lamp on the fountain instead of the usual inverted burner.[5]

Celebration hub

With repairs complete, the fountain again became a centrepiece of community events, such as Red Cross Day in 1918, when market stalls, a shooting gallery and jumble stalls were erected around the structure. In August, a 'monster meeting', aided by the military band, was held at the fountain to support men in the 'March to Freedom' who were journeying from Albury. When Germany signed the Armistice at the end of WWI, the news was received with great jubilation in Camden, and despite it being after nightfall, people quickly filled the street. The fire bell and the church bells were rung, while people added to the cacophony of noise by banging anything that quickly came to hand, and the National Anthem and Rule Britannia were sung enthusiastically. At midnight, a circle was made around the fountain and God Save the King and Auld Lang Syne were sung to end the celebrations. The following day, the town was decked in flags and bunting and a procession of Red Cross ladies marched to the fountain where a large crowd of residents had assembled; various patriotic songs were eagerly sung by those present. These initial celebrations were followed by a fete, church services, and the declaration of a public holiday. At around the same time, it was suggested that a flagpole be erected adjacent to the fountain, and was estimated to cost £6/12/6, not including the cost of a Union Jack. In the end, Mrs. Macarthur Onslow donated the flagpole, which was then erected next to the fountain.[6]

Deja vu

In 1919, the fountain was laid low in a similar accident to the one in 1914 – this time the horses belonged to Brownlow Hill Estate and the wagon was laden with 10-gallon milk cans. The mayor reported to the council that the fountain was 'in a bad way' so it was suggested that they write to Lilian Anderson and propose that the memorial be moved to a safer place such as Macarthur Park. An amendment to this idea was to ask Mrs. Anderson to pay for the required repairs and return it to its present position. This amendment was not well supported by the aldermen and the original motion to move the monument to Macarthur Park was passed. However, this idea was not welcomed by Mrs. Anderson, who believed that moving the fountain to Macarthur Park would negate much of its usefulness to travellers, animals and those who came to Camden each week for the stock sales. Instead, she offered to pay for its repair and re-erection in its original position. The council agreed provided it was protected by a post and chain fence. The flag pole – also damaged in the accident – was erected within the fencing in March 1921, but its



Photo 2: Anderson Fountain, flagpole and post and chain fence – 1930s (Camden Images)

light could not be reinstated as the gas line could not be reconnected to the flagpole due to road resurfacing when water pipes were laid in Argyle Street. [7]

In 1928, the Water and Sewerage Board agreed to supply two drinking stand pipes at the intersection of Argyle and John Streets – one in front of the Rural Government Savings Bank (118 Argyle Street) and the other at the front of the Commercial Bank (125 Argyle Street). This had become necessary as the water was, by this stage, cut off from the fountain in the centre of the intersection. The fountain had now become 'somewhat dilapidated, the gas pipe running up on the outside, instead of through the centre as originally intended' and was unsightly. There were some in the council who, once again, were asking whether the fountain should be moved to Macarthur Park or Onslow Park.[8]

By 1940, and no longer providing water or light, the fountain acted as a 'silent cop' for turning traffic, but this created confusion for some motorists who instead of driving around the fountain were turning the corner in front of it. This prompted the Department of Road Transport (DRT) to send 'Keep



Photo 3: Anderson Fountain in Macarthur Park 2020 (D. Matterson)

Left' signs to Camden Council to be installed on a trial basis for three months, but when the signs arrived, the council refused to use them as they considered it would confuse drivers even further. The council instead advocated for yellow lines to be painted on the roadway to guide drivers around the fountain, but this idea was initially rejected by the DRT. After a meeting between the council and the DRT, the latter agreed to allow the lines to be painted on the road surface at the Council's cost.[9]

Public risk

In June 1942, the Minister of National Service contacted Camden Council regarding the Anderson Memorial in the centre of the John and Argyle Street intersection, telling them that the monument was an obstruction and a threat to public safety should there be a black-out. Consequently, they told the council to install a low-wattage light to show the public where the obstacle was, but they had to ensure the lighting could not be seen from above or from a reasonable distance due to wartime restrictions. Also, it could not be extin-



Photo 4: Roundabout 2025 (D. Matterson)

guished when the other street lights were turned off during a black-out. The council had attempted to achieve this, but without success, and so the necessity of removing the fountain once again came to the fore. The council wrote to Lilian Anderson suggesting the removal of the memorial to a safer and more suitable location and asking for her views on it being re-erected in Macarthur Park. If she found this agreeable, then a 'silent cop' would be installed in the centre of the intersection to guide the traffic. At the same time, the council decided that the flagpole that had been in the centre of the John and Argyle Street intersection for many years, would be relocated to the lawn in front of the town hall in John Street. With Mrs. Anderson's support, the fountain was erected in Macarthur Park and a 'silent cop' was installed at the John and Argyle Street intersection to guide traffic.[10]

Roundabout construction

Between 1976-1986, a roundabout was constructed in the centre of the John and Argyle Street intersection as a traffic device to facilitate turning vehicles and maintain traffic flow. A flagpole was installed in the centre. Every Christmas since then, the flag is removed and the pole used to support a

large, decorated Christmas tree. The lights on the tree are turned on during the Camden Christmas Festival in November. During work to renovate the surface of the roundabout in 2000, Camden Council used the top layer of the sandstone plinth from Thompson's Mill chimney that was demolished in July 1971 after it became a public risk due to falling bricks. This plinth was topped with the circular sandstone capping that had originally supported the round chimney. This capping now supports the central flagpole, although, unfortunately, it can't be seen by motorists due to a low hedge surrounding the base. The road side of the hedge is surrounded by grey pavers, similar to those used on the nearby footpaths, while sandstone blocks have been inscribed 'Argyle Street' and 'John Street' and placed appropriately, and are easily seen by passing motorists.[11]

Notes

1. *Camden News*, 13 Feb 1913; 20 Feb 1913
2. *Camden News,* 15 May 1913; 29 May 1913; 24 Jul 1913; 17 Dec 1914. Camden Museum Archives: *Survey of Camden Sculptures & Monuments - Report for Camden Municipal Council* – Monument #22. Author: S. Dodds, 1999
3. *Camden News,* 26 Nov 1914
4. *Camden News*, 10 Dec 1914
5. *Camden News,* 25 Mar 1915; 18 Mar 1915)
6. *Camden News,* 14 Nov 1918; 28 Nov 1918; 19 Dec 1918; 20 Feb 1919; 6 Mar 1919
7. *Interesting Bits & Pieces of the History of Camden,* R.E. Nixon, p. 11. *Camden News*, 13 Mar 1919; 3 Apr 1919; 27 Mar 1919; 17 Apr 1919; 4 Jul 1919
8. *Camden News*, 25 Oct 1928; 12 Jan 1933
9. *Camden News*, 28 Nov 1940; 12 Jun 1941; 26 Jun 1941
10. *Camden News,* 25 Jun 1942; 16 Jul 1942; 30 Jul 1942; 3 Dec 1942
11. Camden Museum Archives: 'Camden CBD Reports' file. Observation by D. Matterson. Recollections of Roger Percy

Reflections of the Camden Community Garden

Simon Suters

Recently a visitor, (Tim was his name I think), was walking through the gardens, one afternoon, attracted by the poppies that he saw growing in the herb garden. We talked a little about what he was seeing and then he asked me to explain what the gardens are all about.

There was a pause in our conversation while I gave it some thought. I momentarily reflected on the early years when my son and I spent time together growing vegetables, experimenting with different plants, donning bee suits together and harvesting honey, the working bees where the two of us wouldn't go home till late in the afternoon, the compost bays harbouring hibernating snakes, the rosellas feasting on borage flowers, the sunsets in the evening, the vista across the hills where cows graze and where the frogs start singing at dusk, giant pumpkins, bean pyramids, paper wasps, turtles, the Tawny frog mouths beating their hearts out late into the evening and the friendships and connections that I have made with the members over the last 16 years.

All this and so many more images and memories came back to me. I also thought about the structures, the rules the procedures, the meetings, the plot and membership fees and the many personalities that make up our community. In that brief moment when all these thoughts and images came to me, I



A working bee at the Camden Community Garden cleaning up an area for future use (S Cooper)

didn't really know where to start.

How do you sum up so many parts into one response. Does he want to become a member, is he interested in how much it costs, do I tell him he has to turn up to working bees, … what does he really want to know, In the end my simple response after some thought was just this.

"This, Tim, these gardens, all of this land here, this is a gift."
Strangely, Tim agreed, your right he said … this is a gift

I genuinely believe that our custodianship of the gardens over the years and what we do here, every day, week month and each year, is very likely something that Lewella Davies would be pleased with. Certainly it is a place where many people come to hang their hat and derive pleasure from messing about in their plots. Happy Gardening everyone and I look forward to your continued involvement in the gardens in the year ahead.

Extract from the President's Report November 6, 2024



One of the many colourful sunsets at the Camden Community Garden (I Willis 2023)

My Nattai, 1953-1959

Dianne Musgrave-Smith

My parents, Bob and June Musgrave, residents and businesspeople of Camden for three quarters of their lives met in the World War Two mining community of Glen Davis. They had come with their families who were seeking work at the end of the Great Depression. June and Bob were in their early teens. By war's end they had become a couple and moved back to Sydney with June's family. Bob had an apprenticeship in carpentry and gained employment in the booming post war building industry. His love, however had always been with motor engines. So far, they had lived their married lives with one or other set of parents, so by 1953, they were restless to have a home of their own with their six-year-old daughter and their baby that was on the way.

The word went out on the Glen Davis grapevine that there was work for men in the coal mine of S&M Fox and Clintons at Nattai in Burragorang Valley. Early August 1953 Dad took us for a trip to preview where we would be living. Growing along the roadside through Narellan, Elderslie, Mount Hunter, The Oaks and Oakdale, plus the Burragorang Road to the top of the mountain, were loads of aniseed plants in clumps and wattle was blooming everywhere. These fascinated me as a six-year-old.

From the top of the mountain, the narrow and winding road hugged the steep descent which was carved from the rockface and was still unsealed. The exhilaration of facing a fully laden coal truck, plus the beautiful scenery to be observed from a tiny, close to the sheer drop MG window, provided continuing excitement 'til Nattai was reached.

The mining community was located about three-quarters of the descent into Burragorang Valley. It consisted of a post office run by Mr and Mrs Kill, the general store, the public school, the three mines plus houses owned by individual families.

In mid-1953, my grandparents, Stan and Ethel Grimshaw, my father, Bob, his younger brother Roy and the Percival family set out to establish homes near the coal mines where they had gained employment. I imagine S&M Fox had leased land from the 'Crown' to mine for coal. They then allowed our families to 'squat' on this land. This situation was unique as there were many houses around us that had been provided by the two mining companies for their more senior employees.

My grandparents, the Grimshaws, had deconstructed a house they owned in Newnes and transported what they could use to Nattai in Pop's red Bedford truck. Construction of our new living quarters began after work in the mine and on the weekends by the men.



These images are of my grandmother's house (Percival/Musgrave/Grimshaw families)



Percival Senior's home. (McDonald family)

The ground was cleared of trees, and foundations were constructed from culled timber or recycled material. Dad's apprenticeship in carpentry was put to good use. Most men were handy at adapting available resources, too. Stan (Pop), Bob, Roy, Archie Percival and his son Kevin built four very basic structures that we called home. Nan grew dahlias with dinnerplate-size heads in this space. At the back of their dwelling was an extensive and productive veggie garden tended by Pop. Nan was an accomplished cook.

Mum had a safe delivery of her second daughter at the end of September and soon after we moved into our very own home at Nattai. I still remember unwrapping our own china. My grandparents lived just up this rise. Each home had fuel (coal) stove incorporated into the building. Usually, a Metters No 2 Bega brand. By this time a fifth family had been added to our squatting group, the McDonald family.

Mr Richards came to Nattai from The Oaks in his big red van. He visited approximately once a month. When he stopped outside the old shower block the word went out that Mr Richards had arrived! There was a door at the back of the van with shelves internally along each side filled with haberdashery, drapery, napery, knitwear and children's clothes. He probably had men's work clothes also. The smell of the fabrics when you entered the van was intoxicating. The women could order items that he'd bring on his next trip if he didn't

have them in stock on the day. It was a shop in a truck. Mum purchased a white school shirt for me and a school blazer. Nattai could be very cold as it stood in the shadow of the mountain.

Early 1956, Mum had experienced the thrill of a woman in labour travelling the mountain road in a TC MG and on to Camden Hospital. I had another sister. Professional photographers would come to homes even at Nattai and take photos of families. Children would be dressed in their best outfits. Mum made dresses which were red hail spot flocking on white cotton material and red ribbon threaded through Broderie Anglaise as an embellishment on the top. It was a fashion then for even children to wear gloves. The photographer would return another day for the family to choose their favourites images to be enlarged and purchased.

Queen Victoria's birthday, Empire Day, and cracker night celebration was a much-anticipated annual event. On the 24th May each year children had half day school and went home with a small Union Jack card plus the growing excitement of letting off crackers that evening around the bonfire. Crackers could be purchased beginning just after Easter, at the local Nattai store, by children poring over the glass-enclosed treasures and making their selections. My grandfather and I had been collecting items for weeks to create a bonfire. With mounting anticipation, I personally issued all the local families with an invitation to attend the occasion. Pop, (Stan) was a terrible prankster, and he didn't disappoint. Red bungers were let off behind unsuspecting revellers. It was a night to remember.



Nattai Shop located beside the Nattai Public School (D Smith)

The only shop at Nattai was owned and run by Mr Eric and Mrs Ruth Myer. Mrs Kath Cooke supported them, serving in the store. Everything from to fresh vegetables, cold meat, drinks, ice creams, lollies, and petrol plus a wealth of other necessities were sold. Judy Pritchard worked in the store too. The middle child of the Myer family was a boy named Leslie. He and I shared a birthday, August 1947. Many years later, Leslie tracked our family down in Camden to celebrate our 21st birthday together. In the mid 50's. Mr Gill and Mrs Enid Nielson purchased the store and ran it with the help of their daughter, Lynette, and their son, Geoff. Newspapers, mail and bread were delivered daily from Camden by Mr Jefferys, while milk was delivered by dipper from large cans via the Chisham family from The Oaks.

Christmas was often celebrated early, as the mines closed for a period until



Christmas at Nattai
1958 (D Smith)

early New Year. The Musgrave family usually left Nattai pre-25th December. We would holiday towing a packed trailer Dad had built during the year, containing a tent and camping equipment, to join family on the coast or tour around NSW and Victoria. On returning after Christmas break one year the road down the mountain had been sealed giving all returning residents and truck drivers a wonderful surprise.

The sealed road continued down the mountain past the shop, school, community hall, past the entry to the 'Little Pit' and then on to the bridge over Nattai River and to the valley floor.

Over time, Dad added two extensions to the original pitched roof home. One was a bedroom for his girls on the far back right-hand side. Then an extension on the left of the one and only door. At the rear of this addition a shower room was installed containing a cylindrical metal reservoir that released water when a chain was pulled. This was installed above head height. The hot water had to be filled for each use. Up until then we only had a baby bath. Nattai Public School was a two-teacher school. In 1953-1954, the upper division, years 3, 4, 5 and 6 classes were conducted by Mr Ulrich Parsons. Miss Barr and Mrs Leary conducted the lower division classes: kindergarten plus years one and two.

Besides book work, the primary classes had film strips as a regular Friday activity. Topics included the sailing routes of Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Ma-



Nattai Public School with Santa
1958 (D Smith)

gellan, Bartholomeu Dias, Christopher Columbus, James Cook, and Abel Tasman. Movie films on natural science topics were regular too as well as radio broadcasts of music programmes. Friday was folk dancing from the ABC radio, plus, art, then sport after lunch, usually consisting of cricket. Mr Parsons took a very excited busload of students to see the visiting Queen Elizabeth II in Wollongong in 1954.

1956-57 Mr Mervyn Blanche was Nattai Public School's headmaster. He was an inspiring teacher. A new building was completed in 1956, and it became the upper division. The classroom had a nature table and a small library with beautiful big colourful non-fiction books as well as novels. Mr Blanche introduced the use of a duplicator. After lunch the smell of methylated spirits heralded a poetry lesson e.g." Silver", by Walter de la Mare. His wife, Robyn took sewing lessons for girls while boys did woodwork. Plaster of paris models of kangaroos were a new experience. Also to be taken out in the rain to observe 'erosion' in action by the side of the road was inventive teaching. The infants' teacher in 1956-1957 was Mr Allen. He wore shirts made of the new fabric called nylon.

Nattai Public School badge was designed and produced by Mr Blanche. The mountains and the bush represent the beautiful Burragorang Valley. The golden wall represents the Warragamba Dam wall. The blue water represents how the valley was filled to supply Sydney with water. There is a part of mining equipment at the bottom to remind us of the industry all families relied on. In 1958, Mr Smith was the principal of this two-teacher school. He had upper division and Mr Holland was principal in 1959.

As a young boy, my dad, Bob Musgrave, was a victim of polio. Dr A. B. Sabin's invention of an oral vaccine for the prevention of the dreaded polio virus was enthusiastically embraced throughout the world. Nattai Public School was included in this early intervention. The oral vaccine was administered by a small dose from a little plastic spoon. (One of the early disposable products.)

An Aboriginal family lived to the rear of the Dept of Education land on an Anglican Church site. They were living in a tent and relied on school tank water and toilet facilities. The children attended N.P.S. Elaine was the family's daughter and was much admired for her hopscotch prowess. Her Dad was employed cutting down timber around the circumference of the proposed water level of Lake Burragorang.

Behind the school boundary it was planned to build an Anglican Church. A short distance down the valley road was a recently constructed community hall. In this space, the Reverend Mr Leask from St Luke's Anglican church,

The Oaks would organise a weekly afternoon fellowship session for school children which was enthusiastically attended. Dog and the Bone was a favourite activity. Exhaustion and the odd splinter would often follow. Mr Leask was a much-admired visitor to Nattai. He also held Sunday School in the smaller side room of the community hall.

Dad completed a correspondence course graduating as a diesel mechanic. He had finally fulfilled his dream of working with engines. Because he worked each Saturday, Friday afternoon was the weekly Musgrave family shopping trip to Camden. As close to 3pm as possible, they would head off up the mountain and along Burragorang Road. Many alterations have been made along this road to eliminate areas that flooded or had dangerous curves since these trips were undertaken in small cars with little protection and unreliable motors. Passing through each hamlet, Oakdale, The Oaks was a milestone in the journey.

All shopping, petrol, building materials, butchers, bakers, chemist, fabric and doctors and dentist appointments were crammed into our arrival and shop-closing time of 5.30pm. The family waited in the car or did window shopping 'til Dad finished socialising at the 'Camden Inn Hotel' with family and fellow workers.

The highlight for me was watching the teenager girls leave their places of employment such as Hennings Jewellers, Britton's Chemist, Whiteman's, Stuckey's Bakery. The paper shop was our last stop to buy a one shilling comic to read in the car. The Camden and Capitol Café and milk bars held special allure too.

The young Smart family had moved onto the Percival seniors home while Colin's parents transformed part of the old shower block into their home. In 1958 Mr and Mrs Smart snr plus Colin, his son plus his wife Jenny and daughter Wendy set out for a trip up the mountain. I remember farewelling them. They were fortunate to survive this accident. Mrs Smart snr sustained a broken leg.



Dianne's boulder (D Smith)

This huge boulder hurtled down from the mountain-face at a time unknown. It is located beside the road leading to the S&M Fox 'Big Pit' and opposite the old shower block. It provided me with a place for many hours of contemplation. Very few children of my

age lived close, so this wonderful rock and the waterfall further down the road with its large tadpoles gave me places to spend time observing my environment.

The Warragamba Dam wall had been completed, and the valley had been cleared of all human life. It was to become the storage of water for Sydney. All former residents who lived in the valley hated this decision but had no option.

In 1958, we had the excitement on Fridays of looking at the available homes in Camden that my grandparents could buy. They decide on one in Chellaston Street. Nan now took on the enormous task of patching and painting it ready to move into. We thought it was a castle. Fish and chips became our Friday evening cuisine. Nan and Pop soon got television too. With fingers crossed we three girls would sit in front of a blurry black and white screen praying that the Disney Mouseketeer's Show would come into focus before six thirty. It rarely did. Nan would say, "It's news time now girls," and like magic there would be enough electricity for Chuck Faulkner of TCN to begin his broadcast.

Early 1959, Mum was expecting the birth of another baby. Following another hair-raising trip up the mountain and into Camden Hospital by my parents, I had another baby sister. It was time for the Musgraves to move too. After building several trailers over the years Dad decided to build a caravan to enhance family holidays. This became home for us in the Chellaston Street backyard of my grandparents for the next nine months.

Like so many that lived in and loved Burragorang Valley, from the first Australians to the pioneering farming-families to the families of silver miners and the coal miners and their families, this view holds a treasure trove of memories.



Burragorang Valley from the Nattai Lookout (D Smith)

To the wonderful women that lived in this small enclave of five homes, mothers, grandmothers and wives who held their families together in what must have been a challenging time of survival, I wish to acknowledge you, June, Ethel, Olive, Florence, Audrey, and Jenny. They had little family support due to distance. The threat of unplanned pregnancy was ever-present with only distant medical or phar-

maceutical help. Medical emergencies or impending birth symptoms meant travelling up the treacherous mountain road and then the arduous trip along Burragorang Road into Camden.

These women were ‘confined’ to Nattai for at least one week at a time. Even travelling to the local shop or attending a school function could be an impossible task over the road between their enclave and the bitumen section past Clinton’s pit. No public transport. It was rare for women to have a licence and rarer to have access to a car.



June & Bob Musgrave enjoying the caravan Bob built while living in Nattai (D Smith)

CHS Camden Men's Shed Visit

22 October 2025

Dianne Musgrave-Smith

It was understandable that some members stayed indoors on this occasion as the wind was extreme. Many attendees arrived with bouffant hair styles. We were welcomed by Peter, Warren and Keith. Thank you to David Funnell for offering the Camden Men's Shed to host our visit. Peter Norris is the current secretary of Camden Men's Shed; while our own Warren Sims is in charge of membership and is social coordinator. Warren was filling dual roles, Men's Shed host and historical society member.

A wonderful kitchen and large room used both for their organisation plus on



An attentive group of Camden Historical Society members listening to Warren Sims from the Canden Men's Shed explaining how the complex works (I Willis)

occasions such as our visit or other local groups that need a venue to accommodate a large group, is where we initially gathered. This room is fitted out with tables and chairs and a screen for digital presentations. Due to its size, it was noticed that there was an echo occurring. The Camden Quilters remedied this by supplying beautiful examples of their work to hang around this assembly room, muffling the sound and adding a significant decorative element.

Warren and Keith gave us background to the history and development of their organisation though images and anecdotes and taking questions. Peter (R) thanked them on the Society's behalf.

The three men then gave a guided tour of the very impressive facility. Woodwork and metalwork lathes stand ready to jump into action while materials and equipment are stored with tools great and small. Heaven for retired men. Large boards high up on display in this magnificent work area acknowledge the many generous contributions made by local businesses. An outdoor outlook to the west is to meditate upon. Imagine the discussions held around the barbeque area.

Thank you to all who contributed to the scrumptious afternoon tea. Whilst partaking, a lot of happy chatter and discussion took place amongst the gathered Society's membership.

Beside visiting local places of interest, the purpose of these informal get togethers is to connect society members who may not have the opportunity to get to know other museum volunteers. Also, the monthly meetings may not be convenient for many as colder months are not conducive to evening outings. Carpooling is useful if any location challenges knowledge of the venue or parking. Also, it gives those the chance to help another member who may not have transport.

Any suggestions about other location for future informal gatherings are welcome. Time of day? Day of the week? Location? Please make any creative suggestion that may support this initiative.

Investigating at the moment into 'Carrington' as our next get together location with the possible tour of the historic highlights of this local iconic Camden property or maybe Campbelltown 'Glenalvon' Museum. Watch this space.



Camden Men's Shed with members of the society being instructed on its operation (I Willis 2025) ***Below*** **Shed interior (I Willis)**




Camden
MENS SHED
INCORPORATED