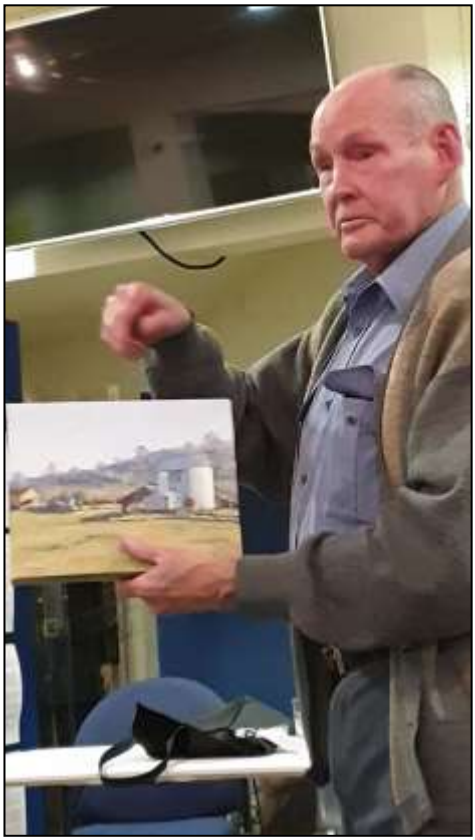
CAMDEN HISTORY

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.

Cover Image: Ron Davies addressing Camden Historical Society 12 June 2019 (L Stratton)

Back cover: Painting of Abbotsford farm buildings c.mid-20th C. Owned by Ron Davies. (A McIntosh)

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Contents

Disastrous Theatre Fire

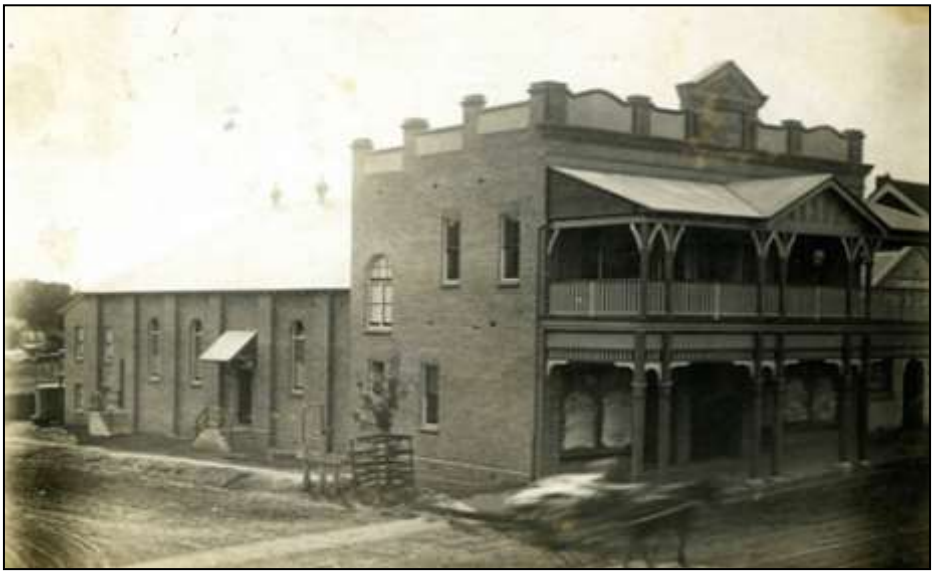
Dianne Matterson

I am researching the history of businesses that have operated in Argyle Street since the beginning of Camden as a township, and thought a 1st person, "eye witness" narrative would be an interesting way to approach this important historical event in Camden.

5 May 1933

As I walked along Murray Street through the early morning chill of late autumn, I had a feeling of both dread and anticipation. The events of last night had shocked the whole town, but as the weak sunshine began to warm my face, a faint hope crept into my mind that perhaps I had just dreamt the whole thing after all. But no, as I rounded the corner into Argyle Street, the black scar covering what remained of Phillip Fox's Empire Theatre came into full view. Not even the last remaining haze of early morning fog could disguise the devastation left by the fire that had started just after midnight.

After glowing red hot last night, part of the corrugated roof was now gone and streaks of blackened water were drying on the brick walls, while the footpath and roadway in Oxley and Argyle Streets still showed evidence of the



Foresters' Hall c. 1909 (later the location of P. Fox's picture theatre) (Coleman Postcard, Camden Museum Collection)

powerful streams of water directed onto and into the building from the fire hoses. Apparently, most of the interior, including the newly renovated seating and picture screen, is now just a chaotic ruin. Mr. Fox had spent a pretty penny on modernising his theatre just last spring and now it was no more than blackened, water-soaked debris. I wondered whether he would ever be able to reopen his doors after such a crushing blow.

Like me, there are several others just standing in Argyle and Oxley Streets and staring, almost in disbelief, while I can hear snatches of conversation as groups of onlookers speculate about the cause of the fire or relive the drama of the previous night. This end of the main street is a mess: muddy and uneven in front of the theatre where the water had pooled until it ran away down the hill towards the Crown Hotel, while the entire stock and shop fittings from the Misses Cahill's refreshment rooms (which had spent the night out in the open after being removed from the shop at the front of the theatre during the height of the fire) were now in the willing hands of many who were carrying the shop's contents across the road to the Cahill's other shop opposite the theatre. Somehow, the sisters, Agnes and Elizabeth, had provided refreshments for the fire fighters and other volunteers last night during the overwhelming confusion of noise, fumes and eye-watering smoke. In the cold light of day, it is very obvious how close the town had come to not only completely losing one of its landmark buildings, but also the office of the 'Camden News' (the western wall of which touches the theatre wall) as well as Nurse Taplin's residence at the rear, where only a narrow laneway separates the two buildings. Disastrous as it is, everyone in the town is only too well aware of how much worse it could have been were it not for the skill, quick thinking and persistence of Captain Poole and the other firemen.

It was Will Taplin (Snr) who'd first raised the alarm at about 12.30 a.m. after he was woken by voices that seemed to come from the nearby lane, while sleeping at his house in Oxley Street. As he looked through the window, he heard explosions in the vicinity and flames could be seen coming from the top and rear of the theatre. Will told his son, Ted, to phone the fire station, after which the fireman on duty rang the fire bell, a sound that quickly roused the townspeople from their beds. Mr. Fox came running along Argyle Street, and with one of his assistants, went inside to try and get the fire hydrant working, but the smoke and fumes were too much for them. They were, however, able to save the films from the storage area on their way out. So fierce was the fire, that even though the fire brigade arrived in a very short time, flames could already be seen through the ventilator in the roof, while other parts of the corrugated iron were glowing red.

Captain Poole and his men went in through the front doors to try to connect the fire hose to the hydrant inside, but, like the earlier attempt by Mr. Fox,

they were forced back. As they retreated, they closed the front doors behind them, minimising any air draughts, in an effort to slow the progression of the fire. They turned their attention to the rear of the theatre, where the flames were edging closer to the Taplin residence with every passing moment. Persistence had its reward and after successfully dousing the fire here, the firemen focussed on the rear roof and were eventually able to enter the building from the Oxley Street entrance. What confronted them was catastrophic. The whole wooden ceiling of the theatre was on fire, but they were able to get a hose directed onto the stage where the flames were at their most ferocious, while other hoses pushed gallons of water upwards towards the centre of the hall. With three fire hoses attacking the flames, by 1.30 a.m., the inferno was under control, leaving only the dress circle, the operating room and the Misses Cahill's shop structurally untouched. With the exception of a small area near the stage, the floor was intact, but the seats were badly heat and smoke damaged. As the fire brigade packed away their equipment and returned to the station, one of the men remained behind to keep watch with the police until daylight.

This morning, the building was inspected by Mr. Fox, the police and the insurance representative; the word around town is that the fire started near the screen and the nearby stage curtains quickly fuelled the fire as the draught from the roof ventilator drew the flames towards the wooden ceiling. Apparently, the building and contents are insured for £5,000, and the damage bill is expected to come to more than £1,000. The insurance inspector has already authorised the repairs, commissioning Harry Furner to organise the work, so everyone is hoping it won't be long before the theatre is opening its doors again.

Mid-late May 1933

Tenders

B*UILDERS desirous of tendering for the reinstatement of the Empire Theatre, Camden following fire, are invited to apply immediately to*

HAROLD S. FURNER

Camden Timber Yards

Phone 40 *Camden*

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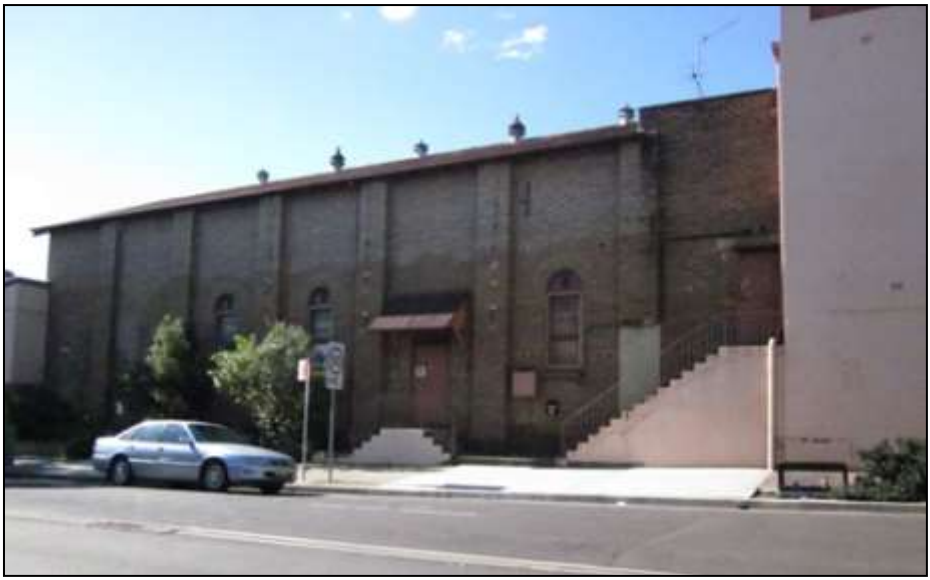
Messrs. H. Willis & Sons have been entrusted with the contract for the reconstruction of the Empire Theatre. Work has already com-

There's been some speculation around the town about the nature of the fire earlier this month, so I'm hoping the inquiry that's coming up will give some

answers and quieten the hearsay. I've heard that Campbelltown's Coroner, Mr. Payten, is going to act in place of our local Coroner, Mr. Baldock.

29 May 1933
There were few empty seats today in Camden Court House when the inquiry began into the theatre fire. Evidence was heard from W. and H. Taplin, Thomas Holbut, Sergeant Porteus, Captain Frank Poole, Moreton Stone and Phillip Fox, as well as Detective Sergeant Surridge who'd come from Parramatta to lead the investigation. Will Taplin told the court that despite hearing voices in the laneway, he hadn't heard anyone running away from the theatre and thought that Mr. Fox was a respected resident of Camden, and had a good character. Other witnesses echoed this, and added that they considered the theatre owner to be in a sound financial position as the business was doing well. Will Taplin heard explosions and this was corroborated by Moreton Stone, who heard something similar while he was on duty at the telephone exchange at the Post Office.

However, the two police officers and Captain Poole each gave evidence that fibro would make an audible crack under extreme heat, and testified to seeing a number of pieces of cracked fibro amongst the debris when they examined the scene later. These three witnesses stated they saw no evidence of forced entry into the theatre, and found nothing untoward to indicate arson, while



Rear of building in Oxley Street Camden (D Matterson, 2019)

each agreed the fire began in the stage area, quickly destroying the curtains, stage fittings and the talkie speaker. Phillip Fox and Thomas Holbut told the court the theatre was securely locked and all lights were off, while confirming there was a 'no smoking' policy for both staff and patrons. However, both Sergeant Porteus and Mr. Fox told of times when they'd needed to speak to patrons who were trying to 'steal' a smoke, and this was borne out by the fact that some cigarette butts were found behind the stage during the fire investigation. Detective Sergeant Surridge had the opinion the fire could've been caused by a wire shorting or fusing, or by a lit cigarette end being thrown down and smouldering until flammable material caught alight. He thought the cause of the fire was accidental.
Coroner's verdict: "The premises… [was] destroyed by fire, but how the fire originated the evidence adduced does not enable me to say."

Postscript:
While repairs were undertaken, Phillip Fox hired the A.H.&I. Hall and staged vaudeville shows. As part of the work, the building's walls were raised six feet – work that can still be clearly seen today when the building is viewed from Oxley Street. The theatre reopened on 30th August, and was a frequent venue for dances, fund-raisers, and school, community and church functions. In March 1934, the Empire and its opposition, the Paramount, came to an arrangement resulting in the Empire being used for 'public engagements and… dances' while the Paramount screened pictures.

This account is based on reports from the Camden News *dated 25 January 1917, 8 September 1932, 11 May 1933, 17 May 1933, 1 June 1933, 24 August 1933 and 22 March 1934.*

Loyal Orange Lodges

Brendan O'Farrell

Recent donations to the Camden Museum of Lodge regalia have led to research using *Trove* into the Loyal Orange Lodges in Cobbitty and Camden in the late nineteenth century.

It was not until a man named Henry James O'Farrell attempted to assassinate the Duke of Edinburgh at a Sydney beachside gathering in March 1868 that the Orange Order reached its zenith in Australia. O'Farrell was a Fenian sympathiser and following his failed attempt on the life of Prince Alfred (the first royal to visit Australia) the number of [protestant] *Orange Lodges in New South Wales increased enormously.*

By 1876 there were 19,000 Orangemen in over 120 lodges. Even in the small town of Kiama, in rural New South Wales, a concentrated burst of Ulster Protestant migration led to the establishment of no less than nine Orange Lodges and the naming of part of the local farming area as "Loyal Valley". https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/6550

The Loyal Orange Lodge No. 81 Camden started in 1873 but started advertising meetings in *The Protestant Standard* in 1874. On 9 May 1874 *The Protestant Standard* advertised the meetings in the Presbyterian Church on the Wednesday before the full moon in each month at 8 o'clock p.m. Monthly meetings continued in 1875. [This was the previous Presbyterian Church in Edward Street, Camden. The current Presbyterian Church was built in 1938.]

The Protestant Standard, Sat 23 Dec 1876, stated that No. 81 Lodge held its regular monthly meeting on Friday evening 1 Dec and officers for 1877 were elected and installed. "*The time of meeting was changed to the Friday on or before the full moon. The Lodge had been steadily increasing in numbers during the past year, and has a satisfactory balance to its credit.*"

In 1879, *The Protestant Standard* reported that the anniversary of the formation of the Camden Loyal Orange Lodge, No. 81 was celebrated by a tea-meeting which was held in the Temperance Hall, followed by a public meeting in the School of Arts, Camden. Before the meeting, enthusiastic ladies and brethren who came from the surrounding districts, "*formed themselves into groups and paraded the town in their gorgeously coloured sashes. a noble exhibition of their spirit and their glory in Orangeism.*"

In 1881, there were 180 Lodges in the colony of NSW, and Camden Lodge

had a remarkable 400 members. There were Lodges at Cobbitty, Picton, as well as in Camden where there were both men's (No. 81) and ladies' Lodges (No. 403).

In 1883, the notice of the meeting states "*No. 81, Camden, meets in the Temperance Hall, Camden, on the Friday on or before the full moon in each month at 8 o'clock p.m.*"

By the time of World War I the political scene had changed. The items of Orange regalia are interesting for the community values of the times.

The McMinn Royal Black Sash - Item No. 2017.73.4

Julie Wrigley, Anne McIntosh and Margaret Wheeler

The item is a very ornate, heavy, black velvet sash backed with orange silk, featuring 25 silver-plated metal symbols, silver and silver-gilt bullion decoration with four tassel fringes of olive green, scarlet/ black, brilliant blue, and gold, at both ends of the sash. 235 x 15 x 2cm.

History and provenance

The object was owned and used by John Thomas McMinn, of "Freshfields", 229 Chittick Lane, Cobbitty. The obituary of John Thomas McMinn in 1913 stated that it was presented to him in the 1890s by his fellow Orangemen, the presentation being made by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward), when John Thomas sailed home to Ireland on a visit.

John Thomas was a Worshipful Master of Cobbitty Loyal Orange Lodge in 1872, and a founder of the Cobbitty Royal Black Preceptory, the senior branch of the Loyal Orange Order, in 1873. The term, 'preceptory' [order] is a designation borrowed from the Masonic Knights Templar. John Thomas McMinn was a member of the Camden Loyal Orange Lodge for about four years before his death in 1913.

The object was donated by Mr Peter Stone of Taynish Avenue, Camden. The sash was kept in the McMinn family after the death of John Thomas McMinn in 1913. Peter Stone said that it would have been given to his grandfather, Augustus Stone, sometime after John Thomas's death.

The McMinn Royal Black Sash

In 2018 and 2019 Mr. Brendan O'Farrell, a member of the Camden Historical Society, asked seamstress Mrs Nola Harris of Elderslie to restore the sash. She spent six months replacing the black velvet and orange silk on the sash, and sewing the metallic symbols back in place.

Statement of Significance

The McMinn sash is a good example of Royal Black Preceptory regalia. The engraved metal badges demonstrate the biblical allusions and symbolism of the Royal Black Order and its activities. The 'degrees of Orangeism' (Loyal Orange, Purple Arch, Royal Black) were highly regarded institutions attended by a large membership of Cobbitty and Camden Protestants from the 1870s.

The owner of the sash, Irish immigrant farmer, John Thomas McMinn, was a well-respected member of the local community and this ornate sash shows the high rank within the order that he held.

The sash has stirred the curiosity of researchers and led to investigation through *Trove* of the context of the Orange Order and the Royal Black in Ireland, Australia, and locally.

Created from velvet and silk, the sash fabric had degenerated over time. It has been restored using similar fabrics that convey its original colour and condition. The symbolism of the metal badges is intriguing; potentially being linked to special ceremonies which have remained largely secret. Taken at face value many of the symbols relate to Biblical themes, but online detractors suggest that the context has been distorted to support political agendas. For members of these societies, the rituals and their symbols teach moral and philosophical lessons.

The provenance of the sash is well documented. The chain of ownership passed from the McMinn family to the Stone family to the Camden Museum.

This is a very unusual object. Both velvet and silk are prone to damage over time and similar sashes were not located in similar NSW museums. Inquiries suggest that despite the widespread distribution of Orange Lodges and related Protestant orders across NSW, very few museums have memorabilia that represent their local Lodges. No objects related to the Royal Black were mentioned by any respondents from regional museums. The Powerhouse Museum (MAAS) has many Masonic items in its collection, but holds nothing relating to the Loyal Orange Lodge. As their collection is NSW-focused and extensive, it suggests that this ornate sash is a rare example of Royal Black regalia in a public collection.

The McMinn sash is a reminder of Camden's Loyal Orange Order and Cobbitty's Royal Black Preceptory. The sash is a reminder of the extreme Protestantism and sectarian values that were pervasive in the NSW community in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

An Independent Woman
My Mother Enid and her Travels

Jo O'Brien

Our family moved to Camden when our eldest children were young, seeking the space and lifestyle we wanted for our growing family. Part of the attraction of Camden was the sense of history, a place that felt like the home of my childhood and my mother's childhood. All the stages of its history co-exist, it is a living history of families, stories, places and locations, proud of its heritage without being frozen in the past. So much of Sydney is losing that, the suburbs we grew up in are changing so fast that they are losing their connection to their history.

I see a strong connection between Camden and the landscape of my mother's childhood in Bexley in the 1920s and 30s. Both close-knit communities of families and friends, villages with farms on their outskirts. And the starting points for two young women who travelled to the other side of the world.

A chance conversation with Dr Ian Willis about the story of Camden local Shirley Rorke and her travels has led me to reflect on my mother's life and the travels she made in the 1940s and 50s. Whereas Shirley travelled in the company of a friend for a year, my mother's journey lasted about 8 years, her voyages were solo, and she travelled literally around the world.

Enid joined the WAAAF (Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force) aged 18 in 1942, serving until after the end of WW2 (J O'Brien)

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My mother, Enid Wilmot, was born in 1923 in Bexley, and had a happy childhood, although the Depression made some aspects of life difficult. WWII started when Enid was 16, and her father immediately re-enlisted, and was in the army until 1947. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour (7th December 1941), Enid felt like there was a direct threat to Australia. She wanted to enlist, aged 18, the army wasn't taking women recruits then, but the Air Force was, so she signed up with the WAAAF.

Enid wasn't called up until 4th April 1942. After a medical she was transported from Central to Robertson for a 3-week rookie course at Ranelagh House. It was uncomfortable and freezing cold, and as Mum was not fond of exercise, a difficult time, but she got used to it.

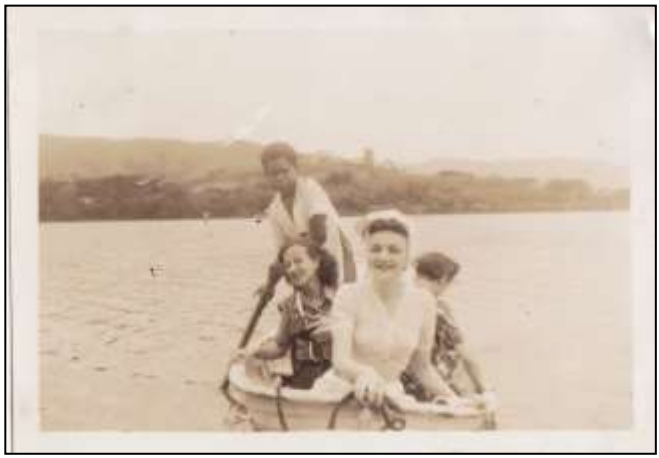
After a couple of days back home she was on a troop train to Melbourne, where she spent 4 months. For the rest of the war she was in Sydney and she was part of the celebrations in Martin Place when the war ended.

Enid said that if not for the war she would have likely married her then boyfriend, settled down and had children.

Fiji (mid 1948-mid 1949)

Restless after leaving the WAAAF, Enid worked in the city, and flatted with friends, not returning home to village life in Bexley, as she had become used to her independence. Then, in 1948 she took a one-year contract with the major store Morris Hedstrom in Fiji, to work in the office there.

Enid really enjoyed her time in Fiji, making friends, touring the island, and socialising. There is an album full of photos which she took with a box brownie camera, and



Enid loved her time living and working in Fiji, making friends and touring the island in 1948 (J O'Brien)

Enid on stage in New Zealand – Enid had a lead role in the show *Golden Boy* for the Wellington Repertory Theatre in 1951 (J O'Brien)

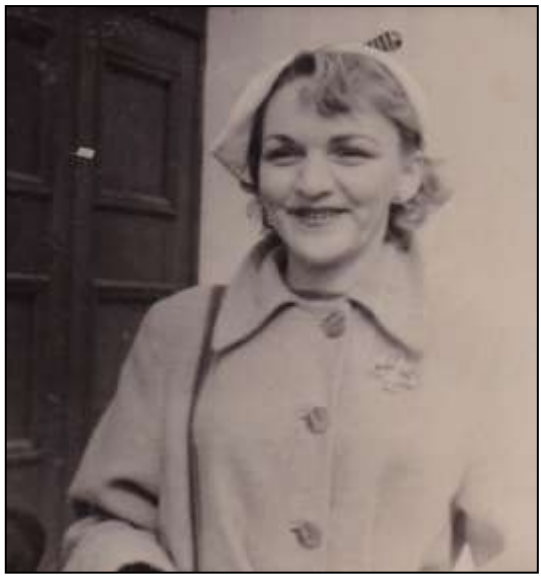
she loved the island and the native Fijian people.

While in Fiji she dated a New Zealander, following him to New Zealand when her one-year contract was finished.

New Zealand (Sep 1949-Dec 1953)
Not long after Enid arrived in New Zealand, the relationship was over. She returned to Australia for a short time, but then went back to New Zealand, and lived in Auckland and Wellington. While in Wellington she joined the Wellington Repertory Theatre and performed in plays, both acting and singing, and also did some radio work. She enjoyed the lifestyle - parties, dances and socials. She travelled a little, to Rotorua, and one time went for a flight in a Tiger Moth, but most of her photos are of her performances on the stage and attending balls with friends.

London (Feb – Nov 1954)
In late 1953 a couple of other girls and Enid planned to go to London – the other girls pulled out of the trip, but she continued the planned trip on her

own. She spent Christmas in Sydney with her family, then boarded the *Ontranto* on January 6, 1954. She would often mention the ports she visited on that trip, Colombo, Aden, Naples, Marseilles, travelling through the Suez Canal, and seeing Gibraltar. I believe she went ashore whenever she could and enjoyed the exotic nature of the places she saw.



Enid spent nearly a year in London in 1954, working for BBC-TV and living in Barnes, but money was tight, and she was unable do much sightseeing (J O'Brien)

She had saved up the money for a one-way ticket, but only had 25 pounds leftover, and no job to go to. She did however get an interesting job almost straight away, which she loved, at the fledgling BBC-TV, and met well-known people including Margaret Rutherford, and Margaret Lockwood. She shared a flat in Barnes with an Australian girl called Edna.[1] She said that she didn't want to live with all the other Australian expats in places like Earls Court. Enid couldn't afford to travel much while she was there, which she would later regret as she would have loved to have done so. She was in fact hungry at times, food was still rationed, and the rent was higher because it was "a nice flat".

Canada (Dec 1954 – 1956)

After less than a year in London, Enid migrated to Canada – that was "the way to go then". It may have been the lack of money, the rationing, or restlessness that prompted that move. At the time she was an Australian born, NZ citizen, living in London and emigrating to Canada. She made the voyage on the *Empress of Australia,* saying that she sailed through a gale and it was the only time she was seasick. The ship arrived in Montreal, but Enid travelled by train on to Toronto as Montreal was French speaking and she didn't speak French.

In Toronto, she got a job at the bank, then worked for over a year as a legal secretary for a firm of solicitors. Here she was earning good money, able to

Enid in Canada in 1955 on holidays at Lake Catchacoma Ontario (J O'Brien)

live well, buy nice clothes, go out to dinner, and after sharing for a while able to rent a flat on her own. Enid said she was better off than she had been in her whole life. She went away with friends to Lake Catchacoma Ontario and had a holiday to New York and saw Niagara Falls.

Return home to Sydney

According to Enid, she reluctantly returned in the first half of 1956 [I have been unable to confirm the date of that voyage.] She caught a train across the US, visiting Chicago, the Grand Canyon, and Los Angeles, and then sailed home from San Francisco via Honolulu, Fiji, and Auckland – thus completing a circumnavigation of the globe, via some of the places she had lived in years earlier.

What was Enid looking for on her journey? I think she was looking for adventure, new experiences, variety, and wanting to discover more about the world. Possibly also an escape from a traditional home life, the confines of home, people's expectations or censure, and disappointment in love.

Was the travel bug/restlessness inherited? In my grandfather's memoir he says (after he returns from WWII service, escorting POWs back to Italy, and time serving in Britain):

"Had the wander lust left me? I am not quite sure, I don't think it ever will. I still gaze out over those great blue waters and long to feel the spray in my face and hear the wind howling through the rigging. My First born must have inherited the wander lust as she has seen and travelled many miles round the globe"[2]

Enid's life was forever changed, firstly by her war service, then by her travels and the experiences she had. The early independence from her years in the WAAAF made it hard for her to settle down into a traditional female role when the war ended. She loved playing a part, and perhaps moving about gave her the chance to redefine herself.

By the time Enid had journeyed to London, she was already an established traveller and a cosmopolitan lady. She lived in apartments in cities most of the time she was overseas. She was stylishly dressed, sophisticated, well-travelled, and had had many extraordinary experiences. In many ways she was a modern woman.

When she did finally marry and have children, she was more than ready to settle down, and was very happy, no longer restless, and content with family life.

I didn't realise how unique my mother was until I was grown up. She was ahead of her time in many ways. I knew many women of her era (including her sister) married, had children and followed a more traditional path, but I still thought of her as a typical Mum, just one who happened to have travelled the world on her own, lived overseas, and acted on stage.

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These notes are based on my memories, Mum's stories, stories from other family members, handwritten notes and a cassette tape Mum recorded in her 70s, and other items such as a 78rpm record recorded in 1952. I have some photographs but would dearly love a letter and memorabilia collection such as Shirley's, which would give so much more insight into her overseas travels.

Notes

1. I have located the flat in Church Rd, Barnes – it is still there, overlooking the Barnes Village pond
2. The Road we Travel by Bill Wilmot (Enid's father) typewritten in 1960s (age about 70)

Textiles, History and Smoking Caps

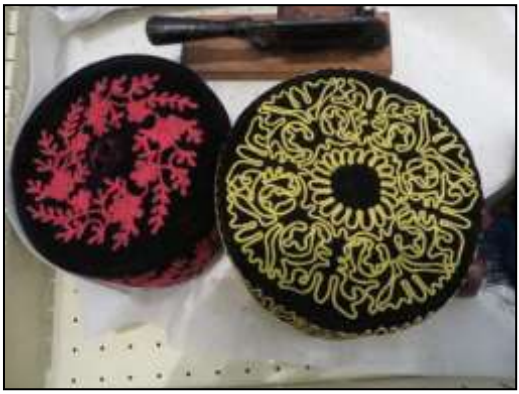
Margaret Wheeler

Understanding textiles and fashion is important in understanding the history of the times. People follow fashion designers and their designer labels, however it is the mundane in articles of textiles from all eras that gives insight to that period of time.

A little booklet printed in 1893, 'The Art of Living in Australia' by Phillip E. Musket, opened my eyes to the different way of thinking at that time, and how as each generation changes, so do our textiles and the way we dress. The textiles mentioned were silk, wool, cotton, and linen. Flannel was used as an undergarment, thin in summer and thick in winter.

My favourite in the museum is in the drawers near the stairs, displaying men's smoking caps from the 1840s to 1880s. A set of three embroidered caps came from Miss Grace Moore "Ellensville", a Mount Hunter property. The crocheted cap came from Colin Clark: his grandfather James Sargeant wore the cap.

Smoking caps, also known as lounging caps, were popular in the 19th century, not only used to stop the hair smelling of smoke but also to keep the head warm. A cap was often worn with a smoking jacket by men of some wealth. Their origin is probably of Chinese, Arabic or Turkish. Wives often made these caps for their husbands. Even in 1893, it was quoted 'that quite a serious amount of damage to health results from excessive smoking'. See https://www.victoriana.com/mens-clothing/mens-smokingcap



Conservation of Textiles
Old textiles may be easily damaged by poor storage and handling. The weight of the article may cause tearing and splitting and therefore support is necessary. The other big problems are dust, insects and light.

There are a number of good sites and references which explain the care of textiles.

(1) Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences gives detailed information on conservation, storage, photography and documentation. https://maas.museum/research/conservation/conservation-resources/

(2) Australian War Memorial, Canberra. For more information, telephone the conservation section (02)6243 4444 and ask for a Textile Conservator. https://www.awm.gov.au/our-work-/projects/conservation

(3) Cavalcade of Fashion https://www.thecavalcade.org

(4) YouTube has some interesting early film showing people in the streets of London, Paris and New York. These early films show what people wore in the streets. The early ones I most enjoy have been posted by Guy Jones. (Speed corrected and often sound added).

(4) Peter McNeil (Australian) has written a number of books on the history of fashion.

(5) (6) There was a 10 week lecture series in 2013 at the Art Gallery of NSW, "Fashion Matters: Fashion, Art and Society" which I found to be very interesting

Notes
Images shown are smoking caps at the Camden Museum, 2019 (M Wheeler).

U.S. Artist Exploring Seeds at the PlantBank
The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan

Kaleigh Rusgrove

My name is Kaleigh Rusgrove and I am a postgraduate scholar visiting Australia from the United States through December 2019. I am a photographer and currently working to find ways to communicate the climate crisis through art. My research is funded by the Fulbright Program, which offers an opportunity for open research and study, while simultaneously forging bilateral relationships between the U.S. and partner countries. I am affiliated with both Western Sydney University as well as the Australian PlantBank, who have kindly allowed me to use their facilities and offered their support throughout the duration of my grant period. The Australian PlantBank, part of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, is a research facility which focuses on the conservation of native Australian plant species. PlantBank is located in Mount Annan and open to the public.

MoMA curator John Szarkowski once said, "one might compare the art of photography to the act of pointing". This quote was introduced to me while I was a student at the University of Connecticut, searching for a reason as to why I had spent so many years of my life behind a camera making pictures. Though I have always enjoyed the act of creating, and had been honing my craft for over a decade, I found myself at a standstill in my practice during a most critical time. While pursuing my master's degree, I had decided to turn my focus from images of fictional narratives to something very much based in reality – climate change. I was not simply interested in this field, but felt compelled to make work about it given the severity of the issue and the im-

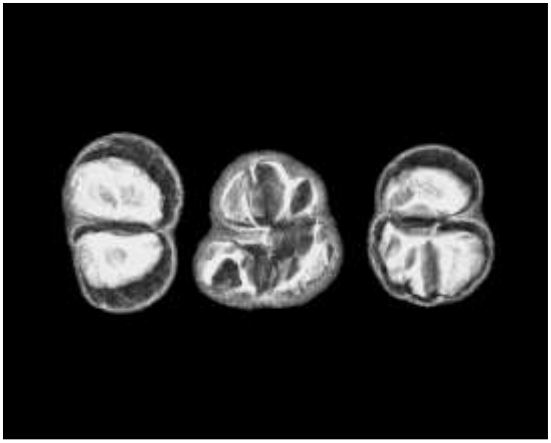
A door to one of the cold rooms in which seeds are stored long term. The collections are vacuum-sealed in aluminum packets and kept at a cool minus 20 C. (K Rusgrove)

Looking in on the seeds of Australian PlantBank. The facility houses 10,000 collections and over 100,000,000 individual seeds. (K Rusgrove)

pact I was learning it would have on my future. I had found something in the world that intrigued and concerned me, and I wanted to point to it.

Early on in my process I became overwhelmed at just how much there was to uncover about climate change. There were simply too many directions to turn and stories to be told. I decided to focus on just one element – seeds and seed banking – because it was something I was vaguely familiar with and often portrayed in the media in a very dark, science-fiction-like light. I began working with the Native Plant Trust in Massachusetts, and after successful shooting decided I wanted to seek out additional locations. It was around this same time that I first learned of the Fulbright Program, and decided to not only look for new locations in my own country but abroad as well.

I began researching seed vaults and bank programs, and came across the Ausralian PlantBank. After learning about the work being done at PlantBank and reading up on the astonishing variety of biodiversity in Australia, I knew I had to do everything I could to get here. Every step of the process felt as though it serendipitously fell into place, and though I knew the odds of actu-



X-Ray of Unidentified Seeds (K Rusgrove)

ally receiving the award were slim, I felt I had crafted the best application possible. In May 2018 I received word that I had been selected, and a few short months later I was on a plane to Sydney.

As I prepared to come to Australia, I was wrapping up my previous body of work and contemplating what needed to change once I arrived. I knew that to get a better grasp on climate change as a major issue, I needed to gain a new perspective – and that's exactly what I have spent the last six months doing. I have been able to do what I pointed to in my application, but explore other avenues as well. I came to Australia with the mindset that science and art were two completely different fields, and that by making art about science I might help to communicate the research behind climate change.

It's not to say that I now have an advanced understanding of botany, or more than a rudimentary grasp of the scientific method. I sympathize with the general public, who often cite confusion as being in the way of taking a stronger stance on the climate crisis. Science can be incredibly confusing, and can often go above the heads of those of us who did not choose to walk down that particular career path. Because of this, I planned to spend my time here making allegorical imagery that would help a viewer better understand the facts. Yet I've pivoted from this mindset, and no longer aim to simplify these issues.

I've sought out new resources and talked to experts, and yet the first explanation I ever received regarding climate change is the same one repeated back to me in nearly every conversation. The science behind climate change is complicated, but the cause is not. We must stop mining fossil fuels. Humans are living beyond our means, and we must change these larger ways of operating if we want there to be a hospitable future for the human race on Earth. To make this change will be difficult. To restructure life as we know it is

Descending through the eucFACE experiement - Western Sydney University Hawkesbury Campus. The native trees within the experiment site are exposed to the same level of CO2 projected for 2050. (K Rusgorve)

hard to imagine, and I'd venture to guess even harder to implement. But that does not mean we should not try.

To me the greater issue at hand seems to be a general lack of care, an overwhelming apathy that keeps us from progressing forward. It is easer to do nothing than to try and ultimately fail. We make small changes, forgoing plastic straws and buying reusable bags. We feel good about these motions, and they do add up to make a difference in the world. Yet we don't tackle the bigger issues, because they're often so deeply integrated into our lives, and feel out of reach of our everyday. On the farthest end of the spectrum, we are unaware that we as humans effect the planet at all.

Six months ago the Royal Botanic Garden and Australian PlantBank opened their doors for me to come inside and explore. They have asked nothing of me in return, and I have crept through the halls and into the labs to take pictures, remaining very much an outsider and quiet observer. For that I am incredibly grateful. At times I wonder if I should find a focus, go deeper into something of a particular interest. Yet the most transformative moments for me have been in the flux of working, offhand comments and simple questions answered. I've learned how difficult it is to store seeds and of the many variables that may keep them from germinating or propagating. For a field that I always believed to be so rooted in certainty, there is so much that is still unknown about our natural world and how it functions. As much as humans would like to believe we run this planet, there are still mysteries to be revealed.

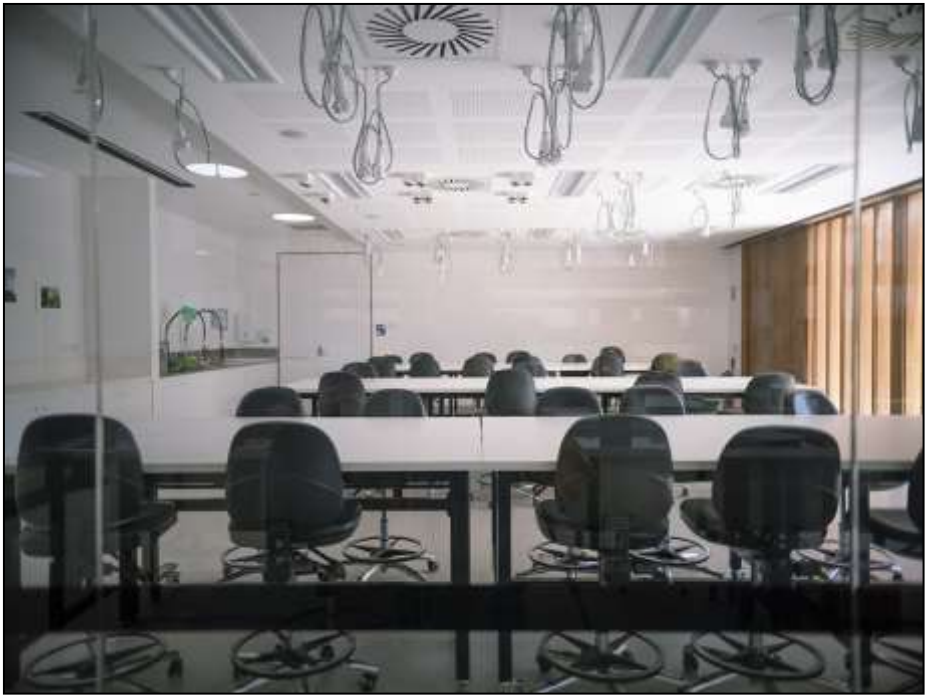
What I've learned is in science, much like in an artistic practice, there are both the plans and then what actually happens. There are hypotheses and expectations, and unexpected results. Things don't always turn out the way we want them to, but we continue to try, and try again. We are always hoping for

the best. But the greatest connection between science and art by far is persistent failure. Yet we return to the lab and the studio, day after day, searching for the answer. And just because we do not have one yet, does not mean that we are wrong.

While I started this journey wondering how I could make people believe that the world is changing and that climate change is real, I now think more often of what it would take just to gain any trust or interest of humans at all. It's easier to remain oblivious than to deal with these issues or to make a major change. We're living a time when so many people are dubious of facts and would rather believe self-proclaimed Internet experts. How can we rekindle trust of those who truly do know best? How can we get people to get off their phones and out of their cars and connected with the world around them again, to realize what is at stake?

My question and approach has changed. While I wanted to make things easier for people, I've done a quite dramatic turn to something more involved. I've

A Wollemi Pine, wrapped to keep in beneficial cryptolaemus montrouzieri (a type of ladybird beetle). These insects protect the rare plant from mealybugs. (K Rusgrove)



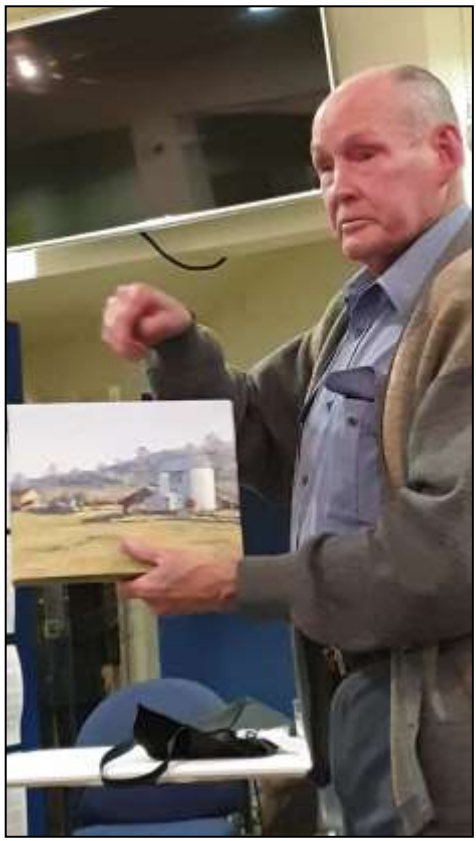
A vacant room at the Australian PlantBank. Empty chairs have become a recurring theme in my work, acting as a stand-in for humans. (K Rusgrove)

always enjoyed a good mystery, and I've started to make work that feels like clues to be uncovered and reassembled into a story. It feels the truest representation of my research thus far, still pointing to this issue, but not telling you what to do. If I leave people unsettled, I think I've done my job. If nothing else, I hope that this work provides a pause, a moment for contemplation and curiosity. I'll accept any emotion, so long as it's not apathy.

Memories of Ron Davies: Abbotsford
From Ron's talk at CHS Meeting, 12 June 2019

Anne McIntosh

Ron spent much of his life in Picton and grew up with his family, on the historically significant property Abbotsford located on the outskirts of Picton. Ron is now 90 years old and has moved to Carrington. Back in Picton, his family is not forgotten – Davies Place recalls his father, and Monds Lane is named after his brother-in-law, who managed dairying at Abbotsford for the Ziems family.



Ron Davies addressing Camden Historical Society meeting 12 July 2019 (L Stratton)

Abbotsford
Abbotsford was granted to George Harper who ran sheep on the land. Ron assumes that the financial difficulty he experienced occurred when NSW transportation ceased and management could not adapt from a reliance on cheap and readily available convict labour.

Major Antill, attaché to Gov Macquarie, subsequently purchased Abbotsford in 1865. It retained ties to Antill descendants until its sale in the 1950s. There were several other tenants before the Fresh Food and Ice Company took over the land in the 1930s.

This entrepreneurial company made Penguin ice-cream at a factory near Ultimo (1 Day St, Darling Harbour), and began exporting refrigerated goods. They sourced their cream from local dairies, including their own, the Byrnes dairy, which milked 40 cows on a 50 ac block at Rosebery. The Byrnes Company, owned by Jim Byrnes, needed a partner to facilitate their expansion, so Abbotsford was purchased by Deacons & Byrnes. Initially, it was a small enterprise that hand milked and transported the milk into the city to the facto-

ry (a three-hour trip each way), but expansion and further innovation had always been planned. Jim Byrnes also leased the Inglis property at Craigend. Ron distinctly recalls the sign on a building at the property as he corrects the spelling of the name 'Burns'. "When I was at school, Jim Byrnes reminded me of the spelling of that name. It seemed to matter a lot to him. It's B-Y-R-N-E-S, that's the Irish spelling, Okay."

During the 1930s, Ron Davies and his brother lived on the Rosebery property where their father managed the dairy. As the population grew, the government no longer wanted dairies close to the city.

Ron Davies' family (there would ultimately be seven children) moved to Picton in 1938, into a slab workers cottage on Abbotsford. Ron's father was foreman at the dairy. Later, when his father was promoted, the family relocated to the manager's homestead which was more spacious and comfortable.

The Byrnes Exhibition Dairy in the 1940s and 50s

The property is about a mile outside Picton, on the Barkers Lodge Road and was known as the Byrnes Exhibition Dairy. It milked 500 cows in winter, and around 460 during summer. The herd was a mix of Jerseys, AIS (Australian Illawarra Shorthorns) and Ayrshires – Ron remembers the Ayrshires for their tendency to kick – "If it wasn't the cups, it was the dairyman. Around 95% of the Ayrshires needed a leg rope. We almost never needed one for the Jerseys, which had a calmer temperament. Except the bull…" Ron recalled that the bull paddock was of post-and-rail construction (four rails), with a sliding wooden window that could be pulled aside to enable the bull to access the feed trough on the outside of the fence." The rule was that you never entered a bull paddock if you weren't on horseback," he recalled.

As 400 ac was insufficient land for such a big herd, the company leased the neighbouring two properties on the same side of the road, providing an additional 3000 ac. "As you travel down the hill into Picton, everything on the right side of the road was run from Abbotsford."

My father didn't believe in cross breeding, so the three herds of milking cows were kept separate, and milked in different batches.

Before milking, the cows would enter the feeders, 100 cows at a time, in four rows. A rail ran down an alleyway at the centre and a trolley was pushed by one man while another distributed the feed into the troughs. The cows were in a head lock to prevent the fastest eaters stealing from their neighbours' portions. The feed varied with the season and in different years. There might be biscuits of hay or other chaff, with concentrates such as hominy meal, beans, pollard and oats. At one stage, ensilage was produced and fed. "It was

Ruins of Abbotsford 2007 (WSC)

fermented and it really did stink," Ron recalled. "It sank into your skin, but the cattle loved it."

As an exhibition dairy, visitors would watch the feeding and the milking. It was a sophisticated set-up in the 1940s and 50s. When the rotolactor began operations, it was closer to the city, and impacted visitor numbers to the Abbotsford Dairy. It was drummed into Ron's head from an early age that the herd had to yield a gallon of milk per cow per day, to turn a profit. He laughs at this. recollection knowing that some Friesian breeders now average 7 gallons per cow per day.

The hours on the dairy farm were long, and even though dairy hands were not expected to do any additional farm work, for those who lived in town and walked to the farm, it was difficult to maintain the routine, seven days-a-week. Mal Travers, who lived down near the railway station (2 miles away), had to be up by 2am to be ready for milking at 4am. Between milkings, the exhausted men would bunk down near the boiler in the shed. Later, Edgar organised for his daughter, Gwen (later Monds), to set up a boarding house in the old homestead. It was popular among the workers who could now sleep in until 3.30 in the morning!

Arthur Hanley was responsible for raising the calves. The bull calves would be sent to Camden saleyards and sold on Tuesday mornings – they were destined to become the devon on his schoolmates' sandwiches. (Ron's sandwiches were invariably roast beef – a useful trading commodity in the playground!)

Unlike most local farmers who sent their milk to the factory in Menangle, Abbotsford's milk was piped, sieved using cheesecloth and stored on farm in a refrigerated 2,000 gallon vat at temperatures so low that ice crystals formed in the milk, but it would still pour. The tanker, was not refrigerated, and the milk would be transported to Sydney. The system was even more cost effective, because at the factory, they would skim off the cream, ensuring they could sell fresh milk for the Sydney market that met the minimum 3.2% butter fat requirement, while directing the additional high fat product into ice-cream. For the other farmers, testing at the milk factory could detect whether water was being added to dilute the milk. At Ultimo, nothing was added, but the cream was extracted!

Although there were milking machines in the 12-bail dairy, during the war, electricity supply was unreliable. When the power failed, a bell would be rung, for all hands to be on deck. On these days, all the wives, and sometimes people from the town, came to help. Hand milking would continue almost all day. Ron's memory is as much for the pea and ham soup served with chicory tea by one of the wives, as for the long hours.

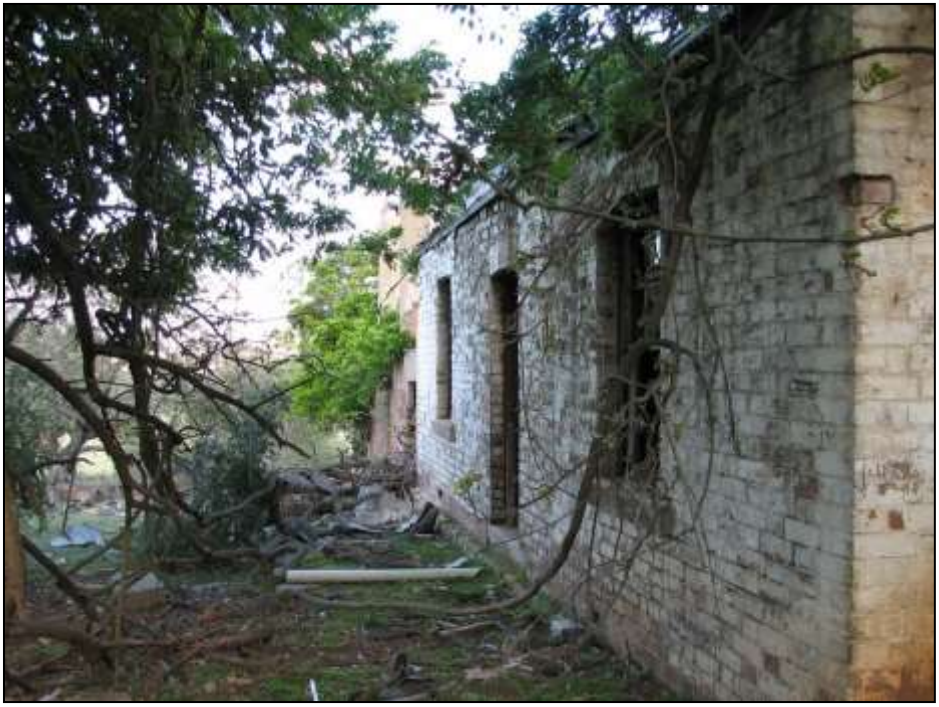
Growing up on the farm

Life was very busy. Morning milking began at 4am and finished at 9.30; in the afternoon cows were milked between 2 and 7pm.

Although he attended school in town, there were lots of chores which tended to take priority when hands were short on the farm. Children were expected to pull their weight.

Like many boys, Ron hunted rabbits and skinned them. But by breeding ferrets for the other rabbit hunters, Ron was able to expand his business. Alongside his job as foreman, Ron's father was a draft horse fancier. There were 30 draft animals on Abbotsford during the war – all Clydesdales, except for one Suffolk Punch and a Shire. Twelve horses pulled the combine, and the harrow came behind. They also used a 12-disc plough, and in the heavy soils of their largest 55 ac paddock, they had to spell the horses at the end of each row.

Ron says that he learnt to harness the draft horses and drive the team from a young age. He recalls having his photo taken by some photographers after the



Abbotsford 2010 (Image by DarylH)

war. He had been instructed to plough up that big cultivation paddock which was one of the closest to Picton. (It was later sold to Wollondilly Council and was added to the town's sportsfields.) The sight of a large disc plough and such a significant team meant that the story was published on the cover of the Byrnes Exhibition Dairy Gazette.

Once a fortnight, he had to help with the muster. Cows were spelled on the steep hills of the adjacent property. Dry cows in calf would be taken out to be spelled, and the heavily pregnant cows and heifers would be brought nearer the dairy.

Ron had a lot of local friends. The town kids loved to visit the farm, and later, three of his friends would be recruited to assist in the dairy, a much sought-after gig.

He also got to know some of the children who were "exported" from England during the recession/war years. Many of these boys had limited prospects and so they sought to impress the farmers' sons in the hope of getting a job on their properties.

Ron had been handling horses all his life, and he regularly entered a horse that he trained in the Oaks Races which were held at the Airfield.

He also did some horse breaking, particularly for the owner. Jim Byrnes kept a number of ponies on the property which were used in the sulkies. One day, Ron jokingly asked him why he didn't invest in some 'decent' horses. Jim answered immediately, reminding Ron that although they might be small, the ponies did the same job, and they only ate half as much as a larger horse - fuel efficiency was a consideration, even then!

Through his friend, Edgar Downes, another local dairyman, Ron's father was recruited to assist at the Royal Easter Show as a 'green coat' ("… but I think they may have worn red coats, back then?"), one of the gentlemen who opened gates to facilitate the movement of stock to show areas and in the grand parade. This meant that his father would be away from the farm for a few days. For the dairy workers, it was a time for relative relaxation without the authoritarian discipline of his father. On one occasion, he recalls that two boys had been boasting their superior sprinting speed for several days. Ron turned off the milking machines, and they marked out a sprinting track in the paddock, and settled it in a 'head-to-head'. One of those boys went on to play first grade rugby.

Another time, in his father's absence, they had trialled riding a cow named Peggy. She was a crazy beast outside the yard, but very quiet while she was waiting to be milked. She tolerated having a boy on her back… and then, there was his father standing at the door to the yard. He was not amused. Ron is uncertain how or why he had returned early, but has not forgotten his reaction to their 'games'.

The job he hated most on the farm was dehorning the calves. The horn and the skin around the horns had to be removed – an awful, cruel and bloody procedure for the calves. However, he also saw the damage that could be done by horned cattle when they were packed into crowded dairy yards. It was awful, but necessary.

Innovations – many learnings

Abbotsford utilised ensilage/silage, a fermented pasture product for longterm storage of green feed. A deep hole would be dug into a sloping hillock, with steep sides and a sloping ramp at one end to enable access by horses. After the feed was cut using tractors it was dumped into the hole and covered by a deep layer of dirt so that air could not penetrate. The green cuttings would ferment over several months, and could be stored for several years. The ponies would then scrape away the dirt that covered a section of the silage pit.

They descended to the base of the pit where the feed was shovelled into their dray. Ron fondly recalls two of those ponies, Major and Dingo. "You only had to take them back to the shed two or three times, and they knew the routine. They'd work in tandem. It was very labour efficient – one guy to load the dray at the pit and another in the barn to unload. The dray had a tipping mechanism, and you'd just scoop the stuff out ready for feeding."

In winter, peas would be grown on the hills. Being legumes, they were a good crop for improving the soil. But picking and shelling peas as they ripened over several months is labour intensive. So farms in the area bought a new machine called a 'pea deviner' and housed it centrally in a special shed (which is still in use by the Picton Show Society). The machine was so efficient because it removed the peas and the vines in a single passage – which meant there was only one crop from the pea vines. This terrible loss in total productivity meant that the pea picker-viner was retired after only two years! Evelyn's and Crawford Creeks were the main water sources for the property, but they sometimes ran dry. At one stage, a bore was put in at the top of one of the hills. The water was red in colour, but plentiful, and easy to distribute downhill. Lucerne was planted and irrigated; it grew well, and then turned yellow… and did not flourish. A soil scientist was consulted. The bore water was very high in iron. Not only was it toxic for the crop, but it would accumulate in the soil, so that future crops could not grow. Unlike many local properties, Abbotsford abandoned irrigation from underground water.

After the war, there was a major campaign to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) from the cattle. It had been discovered that humans could catch TB from milk from infected cows. The campaign was organised by Dr Sydenham the local vet. All cows over 18 months old had to have a BCG test in the skin under their tails. At Abbotsford, 25% of the cattle were culled, which had a devastating impact on the farm and its management. As annual testing continued, the incidence of positive BCG tests fell dramatically.

For many years, there was no vet between Warwick Farm and Goulburn. Among the dairy farmers, Fred Watson was the 'unofficial vet' over Camden way, while Ron's father, Edgar, performed the same role in the Wollondilly area, assisting in difficult calvings (dystocia) and treating cows for milk fever (with calcium carbonate injections), grass tetany (with magnesium) and bloat (by puncturing the rumen with a trocar). It was a casual arrangement between the farmers, no money exchanged hands, but his father might come home with a box of apples or peaches. People had to cooperate and help was provided where people were able – they might loan a bull or a horse for a week, or help out during harvest.

The country around Picton is steep – Abbotsford was no exception. Farmers

in the local area trialled aerial spreading of superphosphate. There was an airstrip on the Fairley place at Razorback and Clifton Bros provided the super. Many farms spread fertiliser by plane as frequently as six times per year. But Abbotsford could not – on the single occasion that they tried an aerial drop, shoppers in Picton complained when the white stuff fell out of the sky. In a recent conversation with Bobby Fairley, Ron learned that although Albert Baxter, Byrnes Dairy and Wonsons ceased the aerial drops in response to those complaints, the Fairleys had trialled the aerial fertilising for four years.

One advantage that Abbotsford had over the Rotolactor dairy at Menangle was that their relatively broadacre operations may have aided disease prevention. Abbotsford also washed udders in the traditional way using a bucket and cloth with disinfectant, which improved milk letdown and aimed to minimise mastitis. Infected milk could be detected in the vat using a white cell count, so udder infections had to be treated early. Antibiotics were administered into the teat along with a coloured dye. While treatment continued, the cow was milked, but was totally unproductive as her milk could not be sold. Mastitis was not absent at Abbotsford, but talk among local dairy farmers suggested that udder infections were a major issue for some farms in the district.

The war years

Ron may have been a child during the war years, but he has some very clear memories.

Picton responded enthusiastically to the aluminium drive donating their saucepans. Ron remembers that for years afterwards they were cooking their food in jam tins.

One time during the war, the army asked whether they could do some practice involving bren guns and their carriers. They arrived on trucks and went up the back of the property near Razorback. I don't know for sure, but I think they would test how they tipped over, and then practise righting them again.

He also remembers the Army marches that passed through Picton followed by an ambulance. The men would leave Holsworthy and walk up Razorback to Picton, then out to Menangle, Douglas Park and back to Holsworthy with full packs and weapons. Within a week, those men would be on a transport heading to a posting overseas. Friends who returned told Ron that they believed that the purpose of those gruelling marches was that when you were in a foreign land and the going got tough, you'd recall that dreadful march you did before you left home, and you would remind yourself that on the scale of

hardships, things weren't really too bad.

An air raid siren went off on the night of the Japanese submarine raids on Sydney Harbour; the local warden, Mrs Picton, drove around the community reminding everyone to cover their windows and turn off their lights.

Ron was 15 years old when the war ended in 1945. At the end of the war, the army had a surplus of vegetables. These were shipped to Picton by train, to be fed to the cattle. Hundreds of cabbages would arrive to feed to the cows, who liked the leafy vegetables. Unfortunately, it gave the milk a cabbage-taint. Other uses for the cabbages were found.

Ron Davies addressing Camden Historical Society meeting 12 July 2019 (L Stratton)

The Army also sent root vegetables – turnips, swedes, beetroots. It was the bane of Ron's life, as it took too long to cut up the vegetables for feeding. Then it delayed milking as the cows took too long in the feeders eating their vegetables. So feeding was moved to the paddocks, where those vegetables had to be broken open for the cattle.

To break the tedium, the boys would throw the vegetables around. The beetroots were every mother's nightmare – stained clothes were not welcomed at a time of shortage. The problem was amplified when a competition in beet-

root throwing between the Byrnes Dairy and the town kids developed. The mothers brought an end to those events.

The circus comes to town
It was probably 1941 when Wirth's circus arrived in Picton by train. The townsfolk turned out to watch the action. The four elephants were the first to be unloaded, and they then helped to get all the other items off the train and down to the showground. They even assisted in putting up the Big Top, lifting men up on their trunks as they hammered the poles into the soil.

During warm weather, Ron frequently went into town to the swimming pool – there were always nice girls down there. He would ride his pony, and tie it up while he went for a dip. This day, he was riding a young horse that had been recently broken in. The whole way the pony played up, challenging his horsemanship. When Ron got to the pool, there were four elephants in the water, and it was a muddy bog. He stayed and watched for a while, but his pony was very unsettled – "Until then, I did not know that ponies hate elephants," he said.

The circus stayed for two days, and left by train. There were huge piles of elephant poo that had been raked up. During the next week, townsfolk were seen at night moving around with wheelbarrows, and the piles shrank in size. That year, everyone said that their vegie patches were very productive, thanks to the circus.

Fresh Food and Ice Company sells Abbotsford
The factory in Ultimo was no longer 'state of the art', and as the city developed, its location was not strategic. The dairy at Abbotsford closed in 1955. Farming was changing, and the steep country, unreliable water supply and relatively unproductive, but high cream producing cattle, were not suited to the fresh milk market that most local farms were supplying.

For a while, Ron's brother-in-law (Billy Monds) managed the dairy farm, and continued in this role after it was bought by the Ziems family, who were butchers from Corrimal NSW. Billy became ill and left the farm – he was 62 years old when he passed away from a heart attack. Since then, the land has mainly been used to graze beef cattle.

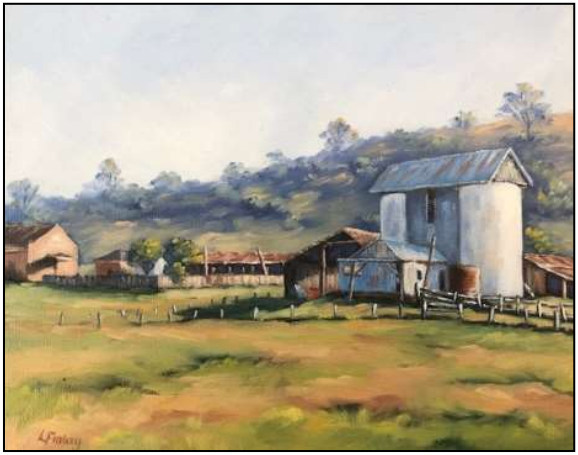
Recalling that time, Ron said that he had been working in the mines and living near the railway station. During the 60s, he was walking up the road to visit his family, when some guys in a car pulled up and pointed to one of the highest hills on Abbotsford. They had recently imported a new 'human kite' from overseas, and were seeking somewhere to launch from to see how it would operate in Australian skies. Ron suspects their 'experiments' were the

first time a hang glider was seen in the area, and perhaps among the earliest flights in the country.

After Ron's family, Max Dalton was a later manager on the property. Wally Greentree also lived in the manager's house at one time. At one stage, it was used as a rifle range with shots being fired across the valley.

The property clearly had a long history. There was an underground lock-up for housing convicts – this was knocked down in 1958. The carpentry in the feeding stalls was the finest, and the tallow-wood strong and long lasting. A number of people recognised the value of the historic site, and suggested that it should be opened to the public. When heritage listing threatened in the 1970s, a fire ignited in the house. A passing car saw the flames and called for help. The fire was quenched before the buildings were destroyed. Soon after, there was another fire, and the buildings were destroyed. The roof was burnt and the old shingles were evident beneath the charred roof. This devalued the property from a heritage perspective.

On 2 April 1999, despite the damage, those historic farm buildings were added to the State of NSW Heritage Register, and in 2013, a report was completed to document their significance, and to guide their preservation. There is currently a DA with Wollondilly Council to stabilize the Abbotsford ruins on the site.



Painting Abbotsford farm Picton. Artist L Finlay. Owner Ron Davies (A McIntosh)

President's Annual Report 2018-2019

Ian Willis

It is with pleasure that I present the annual report of the Camden Historical Society. It has been a busy and challenging year for the society. The society continues to contribute to a number of roles in the community and including: acting as a centre of volunteering; elling the Camden story; and contributing to local tourism

Advocacy
The society continues to tell the Camden story and support local heritage by contributing to: the Camden Council Heritage Advisory Committee; public discussion in the media and elsewhere; and public submissions.

Participation in the community
The society has attended at a number of community events including:

- In 2018: the Civic Centre Antique Fair; HCNSW History Week; Camden Council Volunteers Night
- In 2019: Australia Day parade; Camden Show; National Trust Heritage Week;

Speakers at society meetings
Speakers at monthly meetings have included: Terry Gordon (Nov 2018); Cameron Archer (Feb 2019); Brian Walsh (Mar 2019), Doug Fulford (Apr 2019) and Ron Davies (June 2019)

Volunteers
Volunteers continue to do a great job in a range of capacities from staffing the front desk, research, attending functions, advocacy and other activities. The roster for the front desk in the last year was managed by volunteer coordinators Rene Rem and then Bob Lester. There are currently over 50 volunteers on the roster, and a Volunteers Day was held in July.

Museum
The museum attracted over 6000 visitors in the last year including a number of school visits and community groups.

The Percival Wagon
The Percival wagon has been completely restored by volunteers at The Oaks Historical Society and is the central part of a new blacksmithing display.

Membership
At the end of the financial year the membership of the society was 172.

Community Partnership
The society continues with the partnership with Camden Library and the Camden Area Family History Society. Joint activities have included: Heritage Week in April; History Week in September; and the collection of photographs in Camden Images Past and Present.

Communication
The society published a journal twice a year and a newsletter three times a year. Lee Stratton looks after the newsletter and I am the journal editor. A number of members provide stories to the Back Then page of *The District Reporter*. The society has a strong online presence particularly through with its website, Camden History, managed by Steve Robinson and other social media sites.

Welfare
Volunteer Sue Cross follows up members with 'get well' messages.

Financial assistance
The society has the continued support of Camden Council through a yearly subsidy covering insurances, the provision of two storage units at Narellan and the on-going maintenance of the museum.

Janice Johnson Bequest
Former society member Janice Johnson left the society a bequest in her will. Her instructions for the spending of the funds from her estate including plaques on a number of graves and publishing and re-publishing a number of her works.

Final Thanks
In conclusion I wish to thank everyone on the committee, volunteers and others who have assisted the society over the past year. I want to acknowledge the work done by four retiring members of the committee: Kathy Lester (Treasurer), Bob Lester (Volunteer Coordinator), Cathey Shepherd (Vice President), and Sharon Greene (Committee member). Everyone has done a sterling job in supporting the aims of the society.

The Abusive Mr Chisholm (Part 3)

Peter McCall

In the last issue of the Camden History, *an 1897 published speech of Alderman Henry Willis was used as the starting point for an investigation of a quarrel between Willis and the leadership of the Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society (AH&I) over the Society's expenditure, with accusations of corruption and cronyism. On the 20th December Willis held a public meeting. We have a copy of his speech where he attacks the leadership of the AH&I Society in strong terms. He was also working through Camden Council to bring the Society to book.*

On 22 December 1897 Willis was included in those allowed to see the trustee's deeds and books.[1] The council held an interview with the trustees on the 5 January 1898. Willis was not present. A Onslow Thompson was the main representative of the trustees. The trustees generally agreed that they were charging for use of the showground and that these charges fell within the rules of the Deed of Trust under which they had received the land from the Macarthur Onslows.[2]

Despite this, on 10 January, Willis gave notice that at the next Camden Council meeting a motion be considered to prevent the AH & I Society from charging admission to the grounds and that the Society's accounts be investigated.[3] At the next meeting, at which Willis was not present, Mayor Furner ruled the motion out of order.[4] On 16 March Willis then introduced a motion that the Mayor be sacked because of this action. The motion was lost on 30 March with Willis being the only vote in favour.[5] Willis's attempts to deal with the issue through Camden Council had therefore failed comprehensively. He seems to have abandoned the threat to take the Trustees of Onslow Park to the Court of Equity; presumably he realised that he had no case there.

Meanwhile, Alderman FWA Downes had described the 'Abusive Mr Chisholm in War Paint' in very strong terms - 'That pamphlet was in my humble opinion an insult to the intelligence of the people of the district'.[5] Willis now made Downes the target of his strongest invective- 'Now Mr Downes should not say that his opinion is "humble"- it is not. It is the quintessence of bombastic superfluity'.[6]

However, the AH&I Society had also finished with the issue, now ignoring it. As a coda, at its annual general meeting held on 24 June 1898 JK Chisholm said, '… it may be accepted as evidence that the committee throughout the adverse criticism which has been heaped upon its members, still retains the

Portrait of Henry Willis, 1900s, The Swiss Studios (NLA)

confidence and approval of those for whom it has worked.'[7] More specifically Downes said that '[Willis] now virtually admitted that his former censure was undeserved…. His only regret was that Mr Willis had not gone further

and taken the honourable course of apologising to Mr Chisholm, … for the grossly insulting attack he made upon him and other officers of the society'.[8] It is not clear how Willis had 'virtually admitted' that he was wrong, except to say that he seems to have stopped bringing up the issue of the finances of the AH & I Society after the defeat of his motion to dismiss the Mayor. In November 1898, Willis congratulated James W Macarthur Onslow on his election to council and said that there were no disagreements between the Onslow family and Camden.[9] This may have just been politeness, but indicates a change of attitude to that evinced in 'The Abusive Mr Chisholm in War Paint'.

Willis stood as an independent for the seat of Camden in the July 1898 July elections. He favoured federation. As a result, his attacks on Downes died away, his attentions being otherwise engaged. The sitting member, John Kidd, was re-elected. Willis then spent some time attacking Kidd in the *Camden Times.* However, by this time most of his correspondence was written from Kensington in Sydney. Of the thirty meetings Camden Council had held in the year prior to February 1899, Willis had attended eleven, making him one of the less frequent attenders[10]. He resigned from the council in July 1899[10] no longer living in the district. According to the author of a 1911 *Evening News* article, Willis said that, 'having "put things in order", he would resign and make way for somebody else'.[11]

Henry Willis seems to have been a man who attracted attention by his attitude and actions. Despite the apparent lack of support he received over the Camden AH&I Society, Willis was elected to Randwick Council in 1899,[12] reflecting his residence in that area. In 1901 he was elected to the new Federal House of Representatives as Member for Robertson (which was completely outside the Camden district). Defeated in 1909, he then successfully stood for election to the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1910 for the Upper Hunter. In The House of Representatives he supported Sir George Reid's Free Trade Party, and in the Legislative Assembly he was a Liberal. In both cases he was politically in the centre. At first this seems to clash with his seemingly radical views in Camden, but Willis seems to have been a person whose strong support for causes, backed by his undoubted eloquence, was not necessarily backed by any strong principles except a vague determination to help ordinary people and take down those who saw themselves as the "governing class" down a notch or two. On the other hand, he was associated with the estate of EL Moore, whose wealth must have placed him somewhere close to some of the people he attacked. It maybe that Moore's convict ancestry was still counted against him by the 'bluebloods' of Camden, or at least that Willis may have felt that this was the case.

His position outside the mainstream parties can be seen when he was elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in 1911 with the support of the Labor Party, which was thus assured a majority in the lower house. Not surprisingly, the Liberal Party was furious. Willis was an extremely pedantic Assembly Speaker, giving himself extra powers and privileges and arousing hostility from both parties. 'His overbearing presence and insensitive manner alienated support'.[13] He resigned in 1913 and was defeated in the next general election. He stood as an unsuccessful candidate for the Labor Party in the 1920 state elections. His later career had reflected his behaviour in Camden. He retired to a large house he had built at Middle Harbour in Sydney and supervised four properties that he owned, dying in 1950.[14]

Willis's attack on the Camden AH&I Society aroused tempers and concerns in Camden in 1897 to 1898, but apparently had no long term consequences. It does indicate that the seeming monopoly of power by wealthy landowners in Camden was open to challenge. In its accusation of brutal evictions from the Macarthur Onslow properties and an attempt to give Menangle commercial advantage over Camden, there are hints that there were some sources of discontent in the town. But they are only hints, and Willis's extravagant eloquence and failure to keep his focus on Camden did not mean that there was any proof for them. All that we are left with is the entertaining speech about the 'Abusive Mr Chisholm' which is worthy of reading as a diverting example of late nineteenth century rhetoric and sarcasm.

Notes

1 *Camden Council Minutes 1896-1901,* p188.
2 *Ibid,* p193-194.
3 *Ibid,* p198.
4 *Ibid,* p213.
5 *Ibid,* p215.
6 *Camden News,* 24 February 1897, p4,
7 *Ibid,* 3 March 1897, p1
8 *Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society Minutes,* 24 June 1897, p274.
9 *Ibid*, End Paper.
10 *Camden Council Minutes 1896-1901,* 1 February 1899, p287
11 *Evening News,* 11 September 1911, p10.
12 Spearitt, P & Stewart, E, *Australian Dictionary of Biography: Willis, Henry (1860-1950)* http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/willis-henry-9124 Accessed 6 January 2016.
13 *Ibid*
14 *Ibid*

Memories of Rob Shumack
Camden Fire Brigade

In conversation with Anne McIntosh at the Camden Museum, 28 June 2019

In recent years, Rob has moved to the northern plains of NSW, but has retained ties to motor racing. He was visiting Camden before travelling with young competitors to race in Townsville.

Demonstrating the strength of his ties to Camden, Rob Schumack told me that he grew up on a horse stud, Lomar Park, and was born at Camden Hospital under Sister Hackworthy. He subsequently attended Camden Public School and later, Camden High School, at the 'in town' site.

After leaving school, he was living with his grandparents, Les and Helen Pluis, in Mitchell Street. Their house backed onto the high school. Through them, he knew Llewella Davies pretty well. Other young people thought she was a bit cranky, but whenever he and his friends asked for some fruit from her trees, she was generous. 'She expected people to be polite. She hated it when people just walked onto her place and didn't ask,' he said.

In those days, the Camden Fire Station was manned by 16 part-timers, referred to as 'retainers' who were on call. Each member of the brigade carried a pager, and there was a siren that would ring at the fire station. Available brigade members would leave their jobs and/or homes to go to the station. As volunteers, they were paid according to jobs attended, rather than a wage.

Key documents were the occurrence books for the fire brigade. 'The need to accurately record the details of the fires and who attended was drummed into us from the day we joined,' said Rob. He was excited to discover a copy of the handwritten records from the 1910 Occurrence Book in the museum's file. He said that the layout of the books that he had used in the 1980s and 90s was very similar. As his mind drifted, he queried what had happened to all those entries that he had made in the occurrence books.

He said that Llewella was a strong supporter of the firemen. Invariably, whenever the siren sounded, she would walk up the street with her dog, to see what was happening. When the truck returned, Llewella would join the firemen in the common room to share a cup of tea.

Rob was encouraged to join the fire brigade by Derrick Thorn and Kenny

Barrett and was still a member when the fire station moved in 1993.

The biggest fire he attended was probably at Camden High School. A search of Trove did not turn up the details of the fire, probably because it occurred too recently to be included in their collection of scanned newspapers. He said that the school had to close for a few days, so members may remember this.

Rob fondly remembers the parades that he participated in, using a historic fire engine that belonged to John Southwell, such as the Australia Day Parades and events associated with Camden Show. 'I remember running out of petrol one year on our way to the Fisher's Ghost Festival,' he recalled with a wry smile. Early in his time with the fire service, the firemen would throw lollies from the truck creating a scramble on the footpath. Eventually, the Council decided that this was too risky. During the 1990s, the Camden Fire Brigade celebrated its 100th anniversary – there were lots of celebrations at the Camden Show, and Rob was proud to have been there.

Rob remembers the role played by Liz Kernohan in finding the ground for a new fire station at Elderslie. 'Without her commitment and lobbying over quite a long time, I don't think it would have happened,' he said. 'With the council building opposite the fire station [in John Street], we knew the people who worked there, and Liz took a real interest.'

At the time of the move, Rob said that other members of Camden Fire Brigade included:

Adam Smith (son of teachers who lived in Alpha Road)
Tim Cooley
John Cross (captain)
Derrick Thorn (deputy captain)
Ken Gooch (engine keeper)
Dave Butler
Danny Brooking
Ken Barraet.

The NSW Fire Brigade organised the opening of the new fire station. Many dignitaries were there. At the last minute, the locals realised that ex-Alderman Liz Kernohan had been missed when the invitations were sent out. It was too late for an official correction. Knowing how hard the Mayor had lobbied to achieve the move to new premises and to assist with the relocation, the firemen took the initiative. Among the fire brigade members, one person didn't have a partner at that time. As a result, he had a spare ticket. A phone call was made, and Dr Kernohan sat proudly at the same table as the uniformed officers at the opening ceremony.

One of Rob's recollections of the time after the move was the terrible hail-storm that hit Sydney in 1999. 'We spent a few shifts putting tarps onto the houses with damaged rooves,' he said.

After the Olympics in 2000, Rob moved with his wife and three children to Cootamundra, where he has retained his interest in motor racing. 'As I walk through the glass rooved connection between the Library and the old Fire Station, it brings back a lot of memories,' he said. 'But I do miss the camaraderie – guys like Jonnie Cross, Kenny Thorn and Ken Barratt had a big influence on me.'