

***Menangle*, the “Birthplace of Australian Agriculture”.**

Self Guided Walking Tours around the Menangle General Store.

Directions: Park your car close to the Menangle General Store, and please sign our visitors’ book.

Now that you have arrived at the Menangle General Store, sit down at a table, and digest the background information on this page, as it gives perspective to what you are about to see, in this, the “Birthplace of Australian Agriculture”.

This area is famous for four major reasons:-

1. It is the site of the 1788 First Fleet “Cowpastures”, (where the escaped cattle were discovered).
2. It is the area of Australia’s First Pastoral Company, the “Camden Park Estate”.
3. And lastly, it is the site of the famous and first Australian “Rotolactor”, a rotary dairy milking machine.
4. The area is the oldest agricultural landscape in Australia.

As a result, the Menangle Village has within a 6 km radius, 40 listings on the State Heritage Inventory, as well as 16 historic houses, making a total of about 56 historic assets. The Dharawal Aboriginal people practised sustainable farming techniques here, which encouraged grassland and species diversity, making this an attractive and productive valley then, and for us today.

We encourage you to imagine the following:-

1. Imagine the 1788 first fleet explorers, who had not had fresh meat to eat for eight years, walking into this lush valley in 1796, with river and lagoons, and finding a large herd of escaped cattle, who were now ten times their original number!
2. Imagine this valley becoming one of the largest land grants in the colony, which by 1830 was a vast 28,000 acre property, stretching from Razorback to the Nepean and from Camden to Douglas Park. This was the Macarthur family’s ground-breaking “Camden Park Estate”, that operated for 170 years.
3. Imagine this property then becoming Australia’s leading farming innovator, and being locally and internationally recognised for;
Wool Oats
Meat Barley
Dairy Wheat
Fruit Fruit
Brandy Wine, producing 16,000 gallons in 1849
And celebrating 15 Australian Agricultural Firsts.
4. Imagine also that the Menangle Village was partly a private village up until 1975, when the Macarthurs auctioned off most of what they had left as the family had grown so large. So the result is that a lot of what you see today, was a part of that great estate, and has changed little.

“Camden Park Estate” and the Macarthur’s Australian Firsts List.

- First and best example of a Georgian Farm Complex in Australia.
- First Pastoral Property
- First Cowpastures
- First fine wool export.
- First mechanical irrigation system using an Archimedean screw pump in 1829.
- First exports of brandy.
- First exports of wine to Europe.
- First butter factory in NSW.
- First large iron rail bridge erected in NSW and oldest.
- First estate to breed wholly by artificial insemination.
- First pioneering family still lives here, the Macarthurs.
- Largest pure breed dairy cattle centre in Australia with 1200 head, in 1932
- Largest Rotolactor Milking centre of this design in Australia.
- Largest supplier of milk to Sydney in previous years.

IMPORTANT: We request you sign the visitors’ book in the General Store to help us preserve this area for the future generations.

There are three separate walking tours from the store listed below and estimated times including return to the store are

General Store Tour	15 minutes
North Walking Tour	15 minutes
East Walking Tour	15 minutes
South Walking Tour	40 minutes

GENERAL STORE WALKING TOUR.

Directions: Have a walk around inside the General Store, especially to the back on the Menangle Road. side where the bakery is with its baking ovens still intact. Look out the bakery window and you can see a “bee hive water tank” and a well top. On the back of the door below the stairs remains the mating list of one of the last seasons of planning dairy herd breeding. On the other side of the store is the old butchery with the original brick floor and metal meat hooks and roof meat rails. The purchased meat was passed out the small opening in the wall to keep the flies out. The walls were lined with wood packing cases from England and parts can still be seen.

c1904 Menangle Store and Barn.

- The store, built in about 1904, to the design of the prominent architect firm Sulman and Power.
- The store manager bought provisions, stores, seed, fertiliser and fuels used locally, and having a liquor licence; it was a centre for community gatherings, especially with the community hall next door.
- The Domed “beehive” well in the rear, and baker’s ovens are still to be seen.
- It also supplied groceries and fresh made bread from their own ovens, as well as fresh store killed meat.
- Also drapery, tin ware and anything else that was needed including mail and friendship.
- Customers were supplied by horse and cart “in all directions”. The runs were to Douglas Park on Moreton Park Road and on to Wilton. Secondly to Camden via the estate. Finally across Archie’s Crossing over the Nepean, and up through Mt.Gilead to Appin.
- The barn next door was the produce area.
- NSW Heritage Registered

c1920 Tennis and Cricket.

- Don Bradman played on the concrete pitch with a coir matting surface, in the field opposite the store.
- Menangle held the District Tennis Championship for many years.

The Aborigines originally called the area “Manhangle” or “place of swamps”, hence Menangle, although it was referred to as Riversford at some time in the early days as reference was made to it in the Colony newspaper, Baileys Gazette.

NORTH WALKING TOUR

Directions: From the Menangle General Store, walk down Menangle Road north, towards the River.

- On your right you can see the Great Southern Railway and the Nepean River railway bridge. In front of this in the field, between the two big tin sheds is the Creamery (brick building), with the derelict Rotolactor in front of it. The white silo is to the right and behind the Rotolactor. While the Rotolactor is a special place in the hearts of so many Sydneysiders, as they visited it in their school days, unfortunately the land is privately owned. It could have been a major tourist attraction for the area. It had over 3 million visitors or Sydney’s entire population over its 30 years of operation.
- This field and all buildings were the centre of the Camden Park dairying business.
- A note related, is that Menangle is the home of the new robotic, rotary dairy, just over the hill on the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute. Another world first for Menangle.
- Stop walking at the end of the houses before the Bushfire Station.
- Return to the General Store along the west (the other side) of Menangle Road, as there are houses of varying age. The older ones are 50, 52, 60, 90, 92, 96, 98, 100, 102, 106 and 120, some built as early as 1860.

1863 Menangle "Iron Sided" Rail Bridge.

- One of the most historic bridges in Australia.
- First large iron sided rail bridge erected in NSW and the oldest in NSW, built in 1863.
- Bought from the UK in two different ships, one was wrecked, so one span had to be replaced.

- Created enormous benefit both social and commercial and was an example of advanced design and low cost infrastructure for the time and it received international recognition.
- Intermediate piers were added in 1907 to increase the bridge load capacity.
- NSW Heritage Registered

Nepean River.

The headwaters of the Nepean River rise near Robertson, about 15 kilometers from the coast. The river flows through a water catchment area into the Nepean Dam. From the dam, the river flows through the Sydney Basin, joining other rivers, and onward via Camden and via the Nepean Gorge to Penrith. Before the Gorge it is joined by the Warragamba Dam waters (Coxes, Nattai, and Wollondilly Rivers from Lake Burragorang.) Further downstream near Yarramundi at the junction of the Gross River, the Nepean becomes the Hawkesbury River, which flows through Windsor to Pittwater and to the sea. There are now 11 weirs located on the Nepean River that regulate its natural flow and create 'weir lakes' which have provided water for Sydney's food production, bass fishing, sandy beaches and tourism since the 1890's.

c1880 Foundation of Commercial Dairying on Camden Park Estate.

- In 1880, Mrs Macarthur-Onslow brought back from England plans and ideas to establish dairying.
- Milking became the life blood of Camden Park Estate.
- The individual dairies spread across the valleys specialised in different breeds and cross breeds.
- 1899 they formed Camden Park Estate to control the dairying across their lands.
- By then the dairy company was serviced by 12 cooperative farms and 40 leased farms.
- In 1926 a "special milk" suited to children and invalids was produced and was distributed in Sydney by another company, called 'Camden Vale Milk Company and sold its special milk, Camden Vale Milk, with the golden alfoil cap. Doctors wrote prescriptions for it.
- 1928, The Camden Vale Milk Company later merged with the Dairy Farmers Co-operative Milk Company.
- By 1932 the company was the largest dairy cattle centre in Australia with 1200 head, which increased to 2,800 in later years.
- There were nine model dairies with each dairy having a manager who were supervised by the "home farm" or Belgenny as it was later known.
- Menangle depot became the chief milk receiving depot for the entire area.
- Pigs were raised to consume the waste.
- The butter produced in Menangle was called 'Laurel' brand butter.
- The whole milk was dispatched by rail to Dairy Farmers Co-operative Milk Company by rail to be pasteurised, bottled and distributed.
- 1947 it was decided to streamline the whole system and the Rotolactor was built and operated from 1952. This both improved the operation and the quality of the "special milk"
- The Nepean River and other water supplies were vital for production, as one dairy cow drinks 15 to 20 gallons of water a day and another 30 gallons was needed to wash and maintain the quality of the process. That's about 200 litres per cow, equating to half a million litres per day at full production.
- The estate dams then covered about 100 acres and held 170 million gallons.
- They also had storage capacity for 2400 tons of fodder in vertical silos and 6000 tons in pits.
- It was also the first pastoral estate to breed wholly by artificial insemination in Australia.

1883 – 1948 Butter Factory.

- The first butter factory in NSW.
- They added the Central Creamery in 1948.
- Milk arrived by horse and cart and later by truck.

1898 Camden Park Estate Central Creamery.

- Built by the Macarthurs adjacent to the railway station in 1898
- The Creamery initially separated milk for the sweet cream trade in Sydney, and from 1929 became the local depot for receiving whole milk for city distribution.
- After 1917 milk was sent raw to the Dairy Farmers Co-Operative Milk Company in Sydney, by cart to Campbelltown and then by train
- Historic in that it shows the extent of commercial dairying and its connection to Camden Park Estate.

- NSW Heritage Registered

Rotolactor, 1952, "The Rotary Milking Machine"

- In 1980 it was declared a National Tourist attraction by the Macarthur District Gazette and State Planning
- It was the second of this design and size in the world.
- Made from brick and stainless steel it had walls of glass letting in natural light by day and lights for night milking. It was 24 metres in diameter and was capable of milking 2500 cows twice a day.
- It was estimated that thru the 50's and 60's that over 2000 plus school children and adults visited the Rotolactor weekly. It operated for over 30 years, so it is estimated the total number of visitors exceeded 3 million people, or the population of Sydney at that time!!!
- Each cow was milked in about 7 minutes.
- They entered and left at the same point and as they travelled around they were milked, and they ate.
- It required a staff of nine to operate, milking 300 cows per hour.
- It was an icon in Australia and significant in that it shows the scale and development of dairying in Menangle and tourists and school children visited weekdays and weekends to experience the "special milk" and see the state of the art milking process and production.
- Registered Trade Marks were 'Camden Vale', 'Cowpasture', 'Laurel', and 'Milk with the golden cap', that were used to name produce from the Camden Park Estate Company.
- BHP state "It (The Menangle Area) provides the opportunity to interpret the history of dairy farming and production in the region for a period encompassing 150 years of development.
- The Rotolactor was operated by the Macarthurs until 1973 when the Halfpennys bought it and ran it till the mid 80's.
- NSW Heritage Registered

c1850 Menangle Village, House and Cottages

- By 1950 there were 35 houses of which 23 were owned by Camden Park Estate.
- In 1850, about 900 people lived on the Camden Park property which included Menangle.
- During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many cottages were built in Menangle, for families working in the various parts of the Camden Park Estate. 9 of these survive today exactly as they were.
- Camden Park Estate also moved their workers wooden houses around the estate to where the work was. Today they are proposed for more heritage protection and extension of the Menangle Conservation Area.
- BHP's recent Heritage Assessment lists 26 Heritage items in Menangle itself.
- Significant early residents here on Menangle Road Walk are the older ones, 50, 52, 60, 90, 92, 96, 98, 100, 102, 106 and 120.

EAST WALKING TOUR

Directions: From the General Store walk down Station Street past the Menangle Community Hall and past the early cottages, Riversford Place, and to the Menangle School on your right.

- After return to the store.

c 1904 Menangle Hall (School of Arts Hall),

- Thought to be built at a similar time as the store, but the Mitchell Libuary has the original rules dated 1897.
- Built by the community on Macarthur land
- Dances were held monthly from the early 1900's onward.
- Wrought Iron gates are a memorial to Frank Veness, the Butter Factory Manager 1922-1945.
- The hall was closed by Council as it was apparently uninsurable in 2008, but the Menangle Community Association is in the process of re-acquiring the Hall.

c1850 Menangle Village, Cottages

Significant early residents on Station Street are 6, 8, 10,12, 14, 16 and 27 on the RHS.

1871 Menangle Public School.

- 100 years of schooling was celebrated in May, 1971.
- Camden Park Estate made application for a school in 1849, and a church school was established. The locality was initially known as Riversford, which later changed to Menangle.

- New school buildings were erected in 1906.
- Land was originally purchased by the Council of Education for 40 shillings from the Macarthurs.
- Building was completed in 1871, and the school opened with 43 pupils.
- A residence was added before repairs in 1876.
- The first school building was sold by auction along with the fence on 7th January 1876
- A two room weather shed was added in 1878.
- Church services were initially held in the old school from 28th May, 1871.
- From 1892, 52 shade trees and 20 citrus trees were planted.
- 1906 Half an acre was given by the Macarthur family for a new residence on the western side and the school building and residents were replaced.
- 1915 used as sleeping quarters for NCOs being trained locally in WW1, The Great War.
- 1922 a tennis court and 45 foot flagpole was added in the playground as were veggie plots.
- 1928 was voted the school with the best garden within 50 miles of Sydney, with 54 pupils.
- 1960 two additional acres were obtained from Camden Park Estate.
- 1960 Major painting, new residence and a brick toilet block and new flagpole were erected.

SOUTH WALKING TOUR

(15 minutes round trip but a walk up St James's hill. This tour can also be driven as parking is available at St James.)

Directions: From the Store turn left and walk along Menangle Rd. southwards. Walk past St Patrick's and view houses 123, 125 and 127, then go up the St. James road to the top. After a walk around the church it is most important to walk out past the 'Emergency Assembly Area' onto the common, to take in the view in all directions, especially to Mt Taurus to the west).

1895, St Patrick's Catholic Church.

- St Patrick's Catholic Church was built in 1895 to service the local Catholic community.
- Prior to the church, a small school of up to sixty children existed on the site.
- This school was run by the Josephite Nuns and initiated by Mary McKillop, and it was one of 6 local schools she initiated.

1876, St James Anglican Church "the church on the hill".

- Foundation stone laid 24th March, 1876 and built by the Macarthur family as part of Camden Park Estate.
- The chancery sanctuary and tower were built to John Sulman's design in 1898, to harmoniously blend with the earlier section of the church built to Horbury Hunt's design (who also designed the "fairy tale" house Camelot in Camden).
- It was consecrated 25th October 1923 and given by the Macarthurs to the local Diocesan Property Trust.
- The side walls to be 18 inches thick and the ends 14 inches, with a roof of colonial pine and cedar door with a good 9 inch draw lock.
- Nave bricks are handmade.
- Lectern installed in 1878.
- Chancel was built by Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow in 1898
- Organ 1902, purchased by Elizabeth Macarthur-Onslow and was hand pumped till 1947 when an electric motor was installed
- It has significant stained glass windows, and polished oak interior panelling.
- One of few churches with a weather vane instead of a cross on the steeple.
- A Peel of six bells installed in 2005.
- Menangle became a standalone parish in 2008.
- Entrance gate and trees are the first features you see.
- The horse stables were just inside the gates and housed the carriage from Camden Park during services and also the rector's buggy horse. They were removed in 1930 and sold to RE Hawkey and erected at the back of his home because of the advent of the motor car.
- Registered on the National Estate.

1788, Mt Taurus and the First Fleet Cattle.

- Two bulls and four cows escaped from the First Fleet settlement at Farm Cove, 5 months after the First Fleet's arrival, in May 1788.
- These cattle travelled some 40 miles through undeveloped country to Menangle.
- The settlers were to their amazement, entertained by Aboriginal dancers dancing "the dance of the bulls."
- The cattle were obviously seen by the Aboriginal people, but were only first sighted by a convict hunter in 1795, some seven years after they escaped.
- They had multiplied to herd of 61 cattle.
- 1795, Governor Hunter came to see them and named the hill he climbed Mt Taurus, west of Menangle Village and also named the area the "Cowpastures"
- Once some cattle were caught, this was the first occasion that the new Sydney colony ate fresh beef.
- Governor Hunter made it a crime to kill these cattle, so they could multiply and to preserve the food. It was only then that he and England, realised that the colony would survive.
- Two constables were stationed in a new house called 'Cowpastures House' in early 1805 at Elderslie, near the ford crossing of the Nepean to protect the cattle.
- The area was declared a government reserve to enable the cattle to continue to multiply.
- Only the Macarthurs and the Davidsons were authorised to cross the Nepean River after 1805 when their grants were received, but the government surveyor James Meehan noted there was an established track to the region.

Significant cottages on Menangle Road are, Numbers 120, 122, 124, 126, 128, 136, 138, 140, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 131, 135, 147, 149 & 151.

MENANGLE DRIVE TOURS.

DRIVE TOUR 1. MENANGLE RAILWAY STATION. (1km from the store)

Directions: Drive up Station Street from the store and turn left before the railway bridge. The road is marked Railway Station.

1863 Menangle Railway Station

- Second oldest station complex to survive in NSW
- Built on the new line south from Sydney in 1863 when the old line had finished at 'Menangle North' station, just the other side of the river. The foundations can still be seen behind "The Pines" property.
- Features the remains of the Camden Estate spur line to the Creamery, behind the locked gates.
- In the 1970, a model group made a scaled model railway of the station, spur lines, and dairy, which operated and was displayed around the state. It was famous because at the end of every day, they exploded the goods shed to the delight of onlookers. It is still on display on Saturdays at the new goods shed near the station.
- NSW Heritage Registered.

DRIVE TOUR 2. MENANGLE WEIR AND NEPEAN RIVER.

Directions: Drive down Menangle Rd from the store towards Campbelltown and go over the river and turn right into the Nepean River Reserve, before the railway. From the parking area there is access on bush tracks to the river and to the weir. There are good views of both, with a sandy beach.

Nepean River.

The headwaters of the Nepean River rise near Robertson, about 15 kilometers from the coast. The river flows through a water catchment area into the Nepean Dam. From the dam, the river flows through the Sydney Basin via Camden and via the Nepean Gorge to Penrith. Before the Gorge it is joined by the Warragamba Dam waters (Coxes, Nattai, and Wollondilly Rivers from Lake Burragorang.) Further downstream near Yarramundi, at the junction of the Gross River, the Nepean becomes the Hawkesbury River, which flows through Windsor to Pittwater and to the sea. There are today 11 weirs located on the Nepean River that regulate its natural flow and have created 'weir lakes', which has provided water for Sydney's food production, fishing and tourism since the 1890's.

Menangle Weir

- Thought to be originally built around 1886 as part of the Upper Nepean Water Scheme, to maintain landholders' riparian water rights. It was built of wood which can still be found about a metre below the water.
- The second weir made of concrete, was built in about 1911 as part of a seven weir system to maintain water rights along the river length.
- NSW Heritage Registered

Road Bridge.

- The first road bridge built in 1855, improved transport and opened up the area, but was damaged by the 1867 flood. Its sandstone foundations can still be found downstream.
- It was replaced further up stream by a lower height wooden bridge that would be less prone to damage, but flooded often.
- Previously the fords had been north of Menangle called the "Bird's Eye crossing" and east of Menangle, "Archie's crossing" close to the "Black Hole" and the "Narrows."
- This second lower bridge was then replaced in about 1996, with the higher concrete bridge we use today.
- It still flooded in March 2012.

Other local tourist features in Menangle.

CAMDEN PARK HOUSE, Built 1835.

Only open one weekend in September.

www.camdenparkhouse.com.au

BELGENNY FARM, Macarthur Drive, South Camden.

Open Weekdays, 9 to 5 pm.

Also Public events are Mothers day, Fathers day and the "Dovecote Lawn" Music Festival, in March.

www.belgennyfarm.com.au

Office hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Appointments necessary for weekends.

Phone: (02) 4654 6800 Fax: (02) 4655 9657

belgenny@industry.nsw.gov.au

GILBULLA, Built 1899, 710 Moreton Park Road, Menangle.

May be open in September with Camden Park House.

Ellel Ministries Australia Gilbulla Sydney.

(02) 4633 8102

info@ellel.org.au

RUANE WINERY, 110 Finns Road, Menangle.

Open Sundays 11 to 4 pm.

www.visitmacarthur.com.au

(02) 4636 6249

RAZORBACK RIDGE WINERY, 20 Dawson's Road, Menangle.

Opening Saturday April 14th and then open Saturdays and Sundays , 11am-4pm.

Further Work and Records

A complete history of buildings is being collated, and as this is "a work in progress" it will be available on the Menangle Community Web site www.menangle.com.au in the future. Any suggestions or detail can be logged at the store. Please ask for the "new info form" when you sign our visitors book.

Credits: *The Menangle Community Association would like to thank Frank Evans and Joan Ponsonby, for their published "Menangle 1933-1946, Thirteen Years of Memories" in Grist Mills, Vol.5, and Number 1. (CAHS Inc.)*