

# Dairying 200 years ago in colonial times

Tools and equipment were made mainly from wood and clay. Farmers did not have many iron or steel tools. There was some copper, tin and lead.

The only sources of power on the farm were horses, bullocks and humans.

There was no refrigeration.

At Camden, dairying probably began soon after the land grant to John Macarther in 1805.

# Convicts and dairying

Convicts arrived in New South Wales from 1788 until the 1840s. Most farms had convicts living and working on them.

The main food for convicts was beef and pork along with flour which they made into damper (called 'cakes' back then).

Milk and vegetables were important 'extras' that most masters gave their convicts if they worked hard and behaved well.

Nearly all rural estates kept cows for milking. Convict women usually milked the cows. It was also their job to skim off the cream and churn it into butter.

There were 34 convicts on the Camden Estate in 1806 and 80 in 1820.

# Camden Estate's convict dairy workers

In 1826 John Macarthur was allocated eleven convict women to train as dairy workers and household servants.

The eleven women were convicted in Ireland and sentenced to seven years transportation.

They arrived in Sydney on the ship *Lady Rowena* in May 1826. Here are their details.

| Name               | Age | Occupation      | Crime             |
|--------------------|-----|-----------------|-------------------|
| Margaret Boyd      | 26  | needlewoman     | house robbery     |
| Catherine Bird     | 19  | house servant   | house robbery     |
| Elizabeth Coughlan | 19  | country girl    | stolen goods      |
| Ellen Day          | 26  | needlewoman     | stealing money    |
| Mary Daly          | 30  | country servant | stealing yarn     |
| Mary Farrell       | 28  | country servant | house robbery     |
| Mary Hurley        | 19  | country servant | house robbery     |
| Mary Hughes        | 25  | housemaid       | shop lifting      |
| Bridget Maloney    | 40  | country servant | stealing muslin   |
| Mary Murphy        | 20  | house servant   | house robbery     |
| Mary Meehan        | 22  | nursemaid       | stealing umbrella |

By November 1828 none of the 11 women were still at Camden—seven were back in the Female Factory at Parramatta and three were assigned to other masters.

# Dairy products in the 1800s

Settlers kept cows on their farms to provide milk for their families and workers.

They also used the milk to make butter and cheese which they sold to earn money.

Because there was no refrigeration, butter would melt or go rotten in hot weather before it got to market, so butter was usually made in the cooler months. It was packed in wooden casks and sent for sale in the towns and cities.

Cheese kept for longer so settlers made cheese in the summer months.

In the 1840s Camden Park made butter and cheese in commercial quantities to sell in Sydney.

**A wooden butter cask. In the 1800s, butter sold in commercial quantities was packed into casks like this. A cask usually held 25kg of butter.**

**The casks were made by a cooper (barrel maker) using wooden staves and iron rings.**





# “They served us with fresh milk”

In 1838 several German families arrived in Sydney under contract to William Macarthur to work in the vineyards at Camden Park.

One of the skilled German vignerons, Johann Stein, described their arrival at Camden Park in March 1838...

“Next morning we continued with four wagons and a carriage until we reached the estate of our master. Here they served us with fresh milk.”



German winemakers came to live and work at Camden Park in the late 1830s. This is the third vineyard in 1878 just below Camden Park House.



# Record keeping

The Macarthurs kept thorough records of their many farm activities. The example below shows how laborious that could be. Dairy and creamery records were also kept by hand.

Original Macarthur papers (and micro-film scans) are still available at the Mitchell Library in Sydney and these have been consulted while researching the history of this building.

[illegible]

| Shepherd &<br>Date | Mares | Hens | Withes | Lambs                  |                             | Total | Price        | Remarks.                      |
|--------------------|-------|------|--------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|--------------|-------------------------------|
|                    |       |      |        | Male                   | Female                      |       |              |                               |
| Gray —             | 329   | "    | "      | 153                    | 151                         | 620   |              | Increase 2 Males - 2 Females. |
| Cox —              | 321   | "    | "      | 148                    | 156                         | 619   |              | 6 — 5. 1 Ewe Died             |
| South.             | 323   | "    | "      | 130                    | 132                         | 593   |              | 5 — 3 - 1 Ewe Died            |
| Brown              | 320   | "    | "      | 165                    | 123                         | 600   |              | 10 — 5 —                      |
| Christianson       | 327   | "    | "      | 156                    | 136                         | 591   |              | 16 - 9 - 1 Ewe Died           |
| Wilson             | 110   | "    | 90     | 50                     | 62                          | 300   |              | — — —                         |
| Nade.              | 410   | "    | "      | "                      | "                           | 410   |              | 1 Lamb killed —               |
| Willemsen          | "     | "    | "      | 404                    | "                           | 404   |              |                               |
| Gardner            | "     | "    | "      | 413                    | "                           | 411   |              |                               |
| Farral.            | "     | "    | "      | 300                    | 31                          | 335   |              |                               |
|                    |       |      |        | H <sup>d</sup> . Lambs |                             | 4907  | Total        |                               |
| Flom return        | 93    | 4    | 50     | 89                     | Lambs<br>y. dams & females. | 236   |              |                               |
|                    |       |      |        |                        |                             | 5143  | Grand Total. |                               |
| Abstract           |       |      |        |                        |                             |       |              |                               |
| Increase           | 66    |      |        |                        |                             |       |              |                               |
| Killed —           | 4     |      |        |                        |                             |       |              |                               |
| Last return        | 5001  |      |        |                        |                             |       |              |                               |
|                    | 5143  |      |        |                        |                             |       |              | as B <sup>e</sup> return —    |

| Return of Horned Cattle. |      |       |         |                    |         |       |         |   |
|--------------------------|------|-------|---------|--------------------|---------|-------|---------|---|
| Herdsmen                 | Cows | Bulls | Heifers | Calves.            |         | Total | Place   | Remarks.  |
|                          |      |       |         | Males              | Females |       |         |   |
| de. Cornie               | 09   | 1     | 66      | 39                 | 53      | 240   | London  | Tranase 100, 1 heifer sold, 1 heifer to the House.        |
| Griffin -                | "    | 3     | -       | 05 oxen<br>67 Heav | }       | 155   | "       | Sent 13 Bulls out - killed 11 for the Store Wt - 6985 lbs |
| Homeborn                 | 14   | 1     | 3       | 5                  | 10      | 43    | Harroth |   |
| B -                      | 5    | -     | 1       | 4 oxen             | }       | 446   | Grand   | Total.  |