

Belgenny Farm timeline

Belgenny Farm, located on the traditional lands of the Dharawal, the Gundungarra and the Dharuk people people, was granted to John Macarthur in 1805 - part of a 5000 acre grant named Camden (later Camden Park). From this farm the Macarthurs, their employees and the convict labour assigned to them implemented the latest European agricultural techniques in the fledgling Australian colony. The development of Camden Park is shown in this timeline as it related to the new colony and it's agricultural developments.

Key	Australian history	The Macarthurs	Dairying	Horticulture and cropping	Wool	Australian agriculture
1780	Aboriginal land tenure	When the British arrived in Australia in 1788 the land was inhabited by Aboriginal people - 'from time immemorial, we believe as Aboriginal people, Australia has been here from the first sunrise, our people have been here along with the continent, with the first sunrise. We know our land was given to us by Baiami, we have a sacred duty to protect that land, we have a sacred duty to protect all the animals that we have an affiliation with through our totem system' Jenny Munro, Wiradjuri nation (http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/history/history/).				
1766 - 1850	Elizabeth Macarthur	Elizabeth Macarthur arrived in NSW with her husband and proceeded to become a prominent pastoralist and merchant. Elizabeth managed the Macarthur estates for long periods of time including the 16 years she survived beyond her husbands death.				
1767 - 1834	John Macarthur	Born in England, John Macarthur came to Australia with his wife Elizabeth as an officer of the NSW Corps. John Macarthur died in Belgenny Cottage, he was sixty-one years old and one of the most successful men in the colony of New South wales. John Macarthur was a skilled agriculturist who made an unparalleled contribution to Australian agriculture and to the Merino wool industry in particular. Camden Park and Belgenny Farm continue to this day to play an important part in Australian agriculture.				
1788	Arrival of the First Fleet in Botany Bay	The arrival of the British in 1788 marked the alienation of the land from it's Aboriginal owners as Australia was claimed for the British Crown without recognition, payment or compensation.				
1788	Escaped cattle	Two bulls and five cows escape from the first settlement in Sydney				
1790	John and Elizabeth Macarthur arrive in Sydney	John Macarthur arrived in Sydney on the Second Fleet as a Lieutenant in the New South Corps - a garrison for the new colony. He arrived with his wife Elizabeth and son - they went on to have seven children who survived past infancy.				
1793	First land grant	Macarthur received a land grant and established Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta.				
1795	Cowpastures	A mob of wild cattle, the offspring of those that escaped from Sydney Cove, were discovered in an area to become known as Cowpastures (this area was later included in a land grant to John Macarthur and became part of Camden Park)				

1798 - 1867	James Macarthur	The fourth son of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, James is best known as a politician. However he managed the Camden estates for 10 years from 1817 while his father was in exile in England. He was a director of a number of colonial companies including the Australian Agricultural Company. James was also father of Elizabeth Onslow Macarthur the sole heir to the estate from James' generation.
1800	Wool samples	The first sample of John Macarthur's wool was sent to England in 1800 by Governor King. Macarthur had determined to concentrate breeding sheep for fine wool production. The 1805 land grant given by Lord Camden was for the express purpose of developing a fine wool industry. Despite the mutton market being more lucrative in the early Australian colony John Macarthur was one of the few to focus on fine wool growing.
1800 - 1882	Sir William Macarthur	The fifth son of John and Elizabeth Macarthur was a noted botanist and award winning vigneron. William made a significant contribution to Australian horticulture being published in several occasions and breeding the first Australian cultivar of the camellia 'Aspasia macarthur' which was bred at Camden Park. William established the extensive Camden Park Nursery, was elected to the NSW Legislative Council and was knighted in 1855. On his death his Estate along with those of his brother's was left to Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow.
1801	Court martial	Macarthur became involved in disputes with his commanding officer and the Governor. After his commanding officer challenged him to a duel, Macarthur was sent to England to face a court martial. The court martial lapsed when the papers were lost and Macarthur took the opportunity to gather support for his plans to develop an Australian wool industry.
1805	Land grant at the Cowpastures	Macarthur was granted 5000 acres (2023 hectares) at the Cowpastures - land that Aboriginal people had occupied for thousands of years. The land was granted with the express purpose of developing a wool industry. This land would become Camden Park, part of which the Macarthur's referred to as the Home Farm and is now known as Belgenny Farm.
1808	Wool samples from Camden Park	John Macarthur sent a cask of Spanish merino fleece with his son, Edward, to England. Although it had been "almost spoiled" through water entering the cask, it was reported that it would make very good cloth. The favourable feedback on the cask of wool encouraged Macarthur's development of the fledgling fine wool enterprise.
1809 - 1817	Macarthur estates managed by Elizabeth Macarthur	Between 1809 and 1817 John Macarthur was exiled to England for his part in the Rum Rebellion. During this time his wife Elizabeth managed their farms at Rosehill, Seven Hills and Camden with their nephew Hannibal Macarthur. Elizabeth, in regular contact with John, played a pivotal role in developing Camden Park as a merino sheep stud and thriving wool export enterprise.
1813	Wool export	In 1813, while John Macarthur was in exile in England, Camden (under Elizabeth Macarthur's management) exported a commercial quantity of 36 bales of wool. The fleeces were shipped on the Minstrel along with wool exported by Samuel Marsden and John Riley. Note: the first commercial export of wool from NSW was in 1812 - Samuel Marsden had wool on that ship and it is claimed that John Macarthur did too. The Macarthur papers neither confirm nor disprove this. In 1813 Macarthur's sheep flocks totalled 4,033 head including wethers and

		lambs. There were 1,804 breeding ewes. This export was the result of about 15 years of commitment to Macarthur's vision for a fine wool industry.
1815 - 1816	Researching wine production	William Macarthur, together with his father John and brother James, traveled and researched viticulture and wine making in France and Switzerland. On returning to Camden William planted the first vineyard approximately 700m south of Belgenny Farm. William went on to become one of the colony's leading viticulturists, medal-winning wine-maker and a respected botanist and plant breeder.
1819	Sheep transferred to Camden Estate	The Macarthurs transferred the flock of purebred Spanish merinos of 287 to Camden. Until then they had been kept at their property at Parramatta.
1820 - 1885	Vineyard planted at Camden Park	The first vineyard was planted and river flats cleared to grow wheat and other crops. In 1844 'Pure Camden Wine' was being sold in the Sydney market and in 1849 Camden Park was producing 70,000 litres of red and white table wines and brandy per year. As well as sheep, they ran cattle and pigs and had a dairy to provide milk and butter for the household and estate workers. The vine pest Phylloxera devastated the vineyards in 1885 and production ceased.
1822	Award winning wool enterprise	The Society of Arts in London presented John Macarthur with two gold medals, one for importing 15,00lb (6,804kg) of fine wool from New South Wales, and the second for importing fine wool equal to the best Saxon merino. In 1824 the Society presented him with a medal for importing the largest quantity of fine wool
1826	Wool handling	In 1826 the Macarthurs exported 23,582lb (10,700kg) of wool; by 1830 17,000 sheep were shorn at Camden and 40,000lb (18,000kg) of wool shipped to England from the Camden sheds. During this time the Macarthurs, including sons William and James, were recognised for the quality of their wool as well as developments in breeding, sorting and packing for sale the wool produced on their properties.
1830 – 1839	Camellias and fruit	William Macarthur (son of John and Elizabeth) imported the first camellias into Australia, part of his expanding horticultural enterprises at Camden Park. By 1840 William catalogued 3000 plants growing at Camden Park and had established a commercial plant nursery. The orchard at Camden Park was legendary with 7200 fruit trees including 56 varieties of apples, 31 varieties of pears, 23 of citrus, as well as apricots, plums, cherries, figs and quinces.
1830 – 1885	Wine production	Having trialled a vineyard south of the Home farm (Belgenny), William moved the vines to more successful locations closer to the Nepean River. In 1832 Camden Estate brandy was the first brandy exported from New South Wales. In 1844 Pure Camden Wine was for sale in Sydney and in the 1849 70,000 litres of red and white table wines and brandy was produced on the estate. The wine was sold into Sydney and across New South Wales. In the late 1830s several families of German wine makers were brought to assist the wine making on the estate. In a letter home one of the winemakers commented that at that time there was 300 convicts available to assist. In 1855 the Camden estate wines were well received at the Paris Exhibition and close to 25,000 gallons of Australian wine were exported to the United Kingdom.
1831	Selling butter to	Butter was first sold commercially by the Macarthurs in 1831. It was not possible to sell whole milk to Sydney

	Sydney	because of the long journey, so the Macarthurs made and sold butter through an agent in the city. The initiative for this enterprise is credited to Emily Macarthur, wife of James Macarthur.
1835	Camden Park house completed	In 1831 architect John Verge was commissioned to design a house 'befitting Macarthur's status'. The house was completed in 1835 on a hill about 2km from the farm cottage. Macarthur's descendants live there to this day.
1837	Multiple properties	The Macarthur estate at Camden reached its maximum size of 27,698 acres in 1837. Acquisition of this land included several land grants and purchases.
1840	First commercial dairy	Although the Macarthurs would have always had dairies to provide for the needs of the residents, the first commercial dairy was established near Camden Park house in 1840. Again the initiative for this is credited to Emily Macarthur, wife of James Macarthur. A 'butter woman' was employed in 1843 to make butter and cheese to sell in Sydney.
1840	Sale of Macarthur sheep	In early 1840, because of severe drought, part of the Macarthur merino flock was sold and part moved from Camden to other family properties.
1840 - 1911	Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow	Elizabeth Macarthur was born at Camden Park. Grand-daughter of John and Elizabeth, she went on to have six children who survived into adulthood. She inherited the Camden Park estate in 1882 after the death of her Uncle William and her husband, Captain Arthur Onslow. Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow played a pivotal role in the development of Camden Park's successful dairy enterprises. When she died she had laid the foundation of Camden Park's modern approach to dairying that enabled it to become the largest and best known dairy in Australia by the 1960s.
1850 - 1869	Wheat and other crops	Camden Park sold its registered Merino flock in the 1850s and ceased to run sheep. Wheat and other crops were now the main products of the estate, along with butter, cheese, wine and horticulture. The fungal disease known as 'rust' destroyed wheat crops between 1860 and 1869 and much less was grown. Corn continued to be important.
1851 - 1899	Gold rush	
1851	End of convict transportation	In total 162,000 convicts had been sent to Australia

1863	Railway	Until the rail line reached Menangle in 1863, Camden Park produce that was sold to Sydney markets was transported by horse drawn wagons. This slower trip meant that only products that maintained their quality over a long period of time could be sold in Sydney. The rail line opened new markets for Camden Park.
1865 - 1915	Astley John Onslow Thompson	Astley Onslow Thompson became known to the Macarthurs through his cousins and came to manage Camden Park in the late 1880s. He and Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow established an innovative dairying complex that included share farming, a network of creameries, butter production and the sale of whole milk to the Sydney market. Astley was killed in action at Gallipoli on 26 April 1915.
1878	Selling fresh milk to Sydney	The arrival of the railway to Menangle made it possible for the Macarthurs to send fresh dairy produce to Sydney - with less chance of spoiling on the way. In a letter to Sir William Macarthur, the Manager of the Fresh Food and Ice Company (Limited) in Sydney agreed to take 230 litres of milk per day and offered to pay 1.8 cents per litre. In addition he agreed to take butter at the 'prevailing market price'.
1880	Return of sheep to Camden Park	In 1880, at the request of Sir William Macarthur, a small number of the Macarthur flock were returned to Camden Park. Descendants of these sheep form a museum flock at Belgenny Farm today
1882	Mechanical cream separators	Mechanical cream separators revolutionised the process of extracting cream from milk. Before mechanical separators, the milk was left overnight in large flat bowls and the cream skimmed off by hand. Mechanical separators made the process faster and more efficient (more cream is extracted than in skimming pans). The first separators were large steam driven machines which some farmers installed to separate cream for a group of local dairies.
1885	Phylloxera	The vine pest Phylloxera devastated the vineyards and production ceased.
1886	Dairies Supervision Act 1886	After an outbreak of fever at Leichhardt an investigation revealed that the local dairyman's water supply was contaminated by drainage from Leichhardt cemetery. This act gave the Minister authority to make regulations for more hygienic conduct of dairies.
1887	Study tour to Europe	Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow spent two years studying dairying in Southern England and the share farming system in Italy. She was accompanied by her children and returned home to introduce the share farming system to Camden Park.
1889	Belgenny Creamery	The Coach House at Camden Park Home Farm was converted to a creamery to process milk from local dairies (this is the structure we now call the Belgenny Creamery). There was four creameries on Camden Park - the other three were at Cawdor,
1892 - 1910	Share farmers, pigs and cream	Under the management of Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow and Captain Astley John Onslow Thompson, Camden Park operations grew to include dairies operated by share farmers, tenanted dairies, pig production based on skim milk,

		and a network of creameries including the one at Belgenny Farm. Cream was churned into butter at the Menangle Central Creamery. According to one newspaper report, by 1894 there were 14 'co-operative farms' tending to between 900 and 1000 cows. By 1900 there was 17 share farms and 40 farms leased to tenant who operated independently and simply paid rent.
1899	Camden Park Estate	Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow converted the Camden Park Estate into a private company with her children as shareholders and directors.
1901	Commonwealth of Australia formed	Australia became an independent nation on 1 January 1901 and Sir Edmund Barton was elected the first Prime Minister of the new nation.
1909 - 1980	Edward Macarthur Onslow	As Assistant Manager of Camden Park Estate in the 1930s Edward was responsible for initiatives such as the construction of the Camden Valley Inn and the Belgenny Community Hall. He served in the Australian Army during World War II and on his return was responsible for building the rotolactor. Edward was an active member of the Camden community.
1914 - 1918	World War 1	
1916	Rural Tenants Improvements Act 1916	After the rapid spread of dairying in NSW share farming had become widely practiced. The Rural Tenants Improvements Act encouraged share farmers to take steps to care for agricultural land.
1920 - 1921	Camden Vale Co-operative Milk Co., Ltd	The opening of the Menangle Milk Depot marked a shift in the local dairy industry from selling whole milk, cream or butter to Sydney to a focus on locally processed milk. The Macarthurs supplied milk to the Depot as the Camden Vale Milk Company from 1920 and in 1921 formed a cooperative of local farmers and became the Camden Vale Co-operative Milk Company.
1923 - 1932	Construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge	
1924	Leading the way in clean milk	In 1924 Camden Park's dairy herd was the first to be declared free of tuberculosis.
1926	Model dairies	The first of Camden Park Estate's model dairies opened in 1926, there was nine in total. They were called model dairies because they employed best practice and the highest hygiene standards. The Number 2 dairy still stands at Belgenny Farm and Number 9 dairy is operated by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. From 1926 Camden Park sold milk in bottles under their own brand of Camden Vale Special Milk. It was promoted as safe for infants, invalids and the aged as it was free from tuberculosis, milked in dust proof conditions and immediately cooled and pasteurised. Camden Vale Milk merged with Dairy Farmers in 1929.

1929	Dairy Farmers	Camden Vale Milk Company was absorbed into Dairy Farmers in 1929 but the Camden Vale Special Milk and Laurel butter brands continued to be marketed.
1929	Metropolitan Milk Act 1929	This act defined the Milk Zone - an area within four hours travel by train - within which dairy farmers could sell bulk fresh milk to Sydney at prices higher than that of the processed milk from outside the Milk Zone
1938	Public open days	Camden Park has a history of hosting public open days. Visitors in 1938 had the opportunity to tour the model dairies.
1939 - 1945	World War 2	
1939	Milking machines	The first milking machines were patented in 1836, though they were not introduced into Australia until around 1900. However it was not until the late-1930s, when electricity was more readily available on farms, that milking by machine was widespread. Camden Park ran a trial of milking machines in 1907 but did not install them in their dairies until 1938. The reason for this delay is not clear however it is speculated that it was to do with concerns for cow health and hygiene with the early machines.
1939	Camden Vale Inn	The Camden Vale Inn was built on the Hume Highway in approximately 1939 to sell Camden Vale Special Milk directly to the public. Camden vale Special Milk was sold under this name until 1973. The premises operate today as Camden Valley Inn.
1952 - 1983	The Rotolactor	Edward Macarthur Onslow visited America in the 1940s where he inspected rotolactors in operation. He returned enthusiastic to build one at Camden Park and construction began in 1949. The rotolactor was an icon of the dairy industry at the time, and in the 1960s Camden Park was milking about 900 cows per day in the Rotolactor and 600 in the model dairies and attracting around 2000 visitors a week. The rotolactor operated for 30 years.
1955	Introduction of refrigerated milk vats	After World War II refrigerated milk vats on dairy farms replaced the traditional ten gallon (approx 40 litre) milk cans for storage of raw milk. This saved labour both on farms and in milk factories and enhanced the quality of milk.
1959 - 1973	Construction of the Sydney Opera House	
1967	Australian referendum to recognize Aboriginal people as Australian citizens	
1971	Aboriginal flag first flown	

1973	Sale of Camden Park Estate	An investment company, Talga, bought all but around 1000 acres of the Camden Park Estate in 1973. Farming continued in some parts of the property but did not last. The sale and marketing of Camden Vale Special Milk ceased and the orchards were removed. The family retained the 1000 acres around Camden Park House.
1984 - 2015	The past and the future	The NSW State government purchased 1583 hectares of the Camden Park Estate from developers in 1984. The Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) research facility opened in 1990. The government also created the Belgenny Farm Agricultural Heritage Centre Trust to manage land and heritage buildings now known as Belgenny Farm.
1990	Opening of EMAI	First opened in 1990, the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI) is the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Centre of Excellence for Animal and Plant Health. EMAI plays a vital role in the protection of Australia's economy, community and environment from animal and plant pests and diseases. (source: http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/centres/emai) At the veterinary laboratories specialist research and diagnosis services are provided in the fields of animal pathology, virology, microbiology, immunology and parasitology and are a first line of defence in detecting new and introduced animal diseases to Australia.
2001	Automated milking systems	The first automated dairy in Australia was installed in 2001. In these dairies cows wear an electronic tag that the system reads as cows enter the dairy and recognises the feed and milking requirements of individual cows. A robotic arm attaches cups to the cows teats and removes them as milk flow drops below a minimum level. In many automated systems the dairy is open all day and night and cows are fed, milked and monitored at all times of the day.
2006	State of the local dairy industry	With the introduction of refrigerated milk vats on farms some farmers chose to leave the industry rather than install the vats; some dairies were sold to make way for residential development and the in 1990s and 2000s some dairies closed as deregulation made dairying less profitable. In 1959 there was 99 dairy suppliers to the Camden depot, in 2006 there was still thirteen commercial dairies (plus two institutional herds one at EMAI and one at the University of Sydney farm). Ten of these farmers were original suppliers to the Camden depot.

