

2.0 THE CONTEXT:

DESCRIBING CAMPBELLTOWN'S SCENIC LANDSCAPE

The aesthetic and environmental values of the open spaces that define the setting of the Campbelltown LGA have been appreciated for many years, with the first written admiration dating from the time of the earliest European exploration in the area. This section reviews some of the early accounts of the landscape, including diary entries and pictorial and photographic depictions throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries to better understand what about the landscape was valued by earlier generations and how these values are expressed in the landscape we see today.



Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2. This partial panorama of Campbelltown looks north/west from the tower of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Cordeaux Street, Campbelltown, 1928. The street on the right is Moore Street. The hill at the far left has a profile matching that of Mount Universe.

Collection of Campbelltown & Airds Historical Society. Accessed via Campbelltown City Council website: *Our Past in Pictures*. www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au.

Throughout the earlier part of the 20th century numerous photographs were taken of the town of Campbelltown. A search of Council's website (www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au) under 'Our Past in Pictures' gives access to a considerable number of such photographs from the Campbelltown City Council library collections. From the 1920s into the 1970s views from Mawson Park or the town's main streets include the backdrop of the elevated range of cleared lands to the west and south as a constant backdrop. This all-pervasive element becomes both a key element in the photographic composition as well as an important reference point in interpreting these early images.

2.1 EARLY RECORDS OF CAMPBELLTOWN'S LANDSCAPE SCENERY

*"Approaching the residence of Mr Howe, the proprietor of Glenlee, we were much pleased with the extensive and beautiful prospect which it commands: the hills are many of them high and remarkable resembling closely some parts of the Wiltshire Downs: almost the whole district of the Cowpastures lies spread out in view..."*⁸

⁸ Quoted by Clive Lucas in *Building Conservation in Australia*, Ed. Freeman, Martin and Dean 1985

So wrote Mrs Felton Mathew (wife of the surveyor) in 1833 of country typical of the Campbelltown Local Government Area. Again at Glenlee, the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, writing of his visit there in 1837, observed that the “country is of an undulating character, and the scenery from Glenlee house ... is rich and most agreeably diversified”⁹. As well as Glenlee, William Howe also held 7000 acres near Liverpool and, in 1824, entertained there the civil servant GTWB Boyes and his Spanish friend JBL D’Arrietta. En route from Sydney to D’Arrietta’s estate at Morton Park¹⁰ to the south of Campbelltown, Boyes wrote “we breakfasted with Mr Howe [near Liverpool] – Magistrate of Upper Minto - soon after passing his house the country began to open all round us and from the hills we looked over a considerable extent.”¹¹ The Parish of Minto extends over the northern areas of both the Scenic Hills and EESPLs, but this comment is most likely to refer to the scenery along the primary track through the area, now known as Campbelltown Road, since it refers to the well-modulated topography characteristic of the Wianamatta shale country in this area rather than the more open plains opening to the south of the Glenlee property. In order to actually see over “a considerable extent” it is likely that the viewing point was relatively high and that the landscape was free of obstructive vegetation. The clearing of vegetation from an important landscape feature such as a scenic vantage point to provide unimpeded views was common practice in the Colonial period.

Of particular interest in these early 19th Century descriptions are the observations concerning the hills – “high and remarkable” and from which “we looked over a considerable extent”. Both Mrs Mathew and Boyes not only noted these conspicuous landscape features, but were sufficiently moved by the prospects from, and of, them to record the experience in their diaries. In these two instances, together with Lang’s observation, it can be seen that the hills were considered noteworthy both as vantage points and also as part of the composition of the picturesque landscape scenery.

An even earlier account also refers to this characteristic Campbelltown landscape. In August 1809, James Meehan surveyed land that was to become Robert Townson’s grant of “Varro Ville”. In doing so Meehan mentioned the hill of Bunbury Curran, a range, flats and hollows, hills and dales, ponds and iron bark trees¹², and the [Bunbury Curran] creek. Again these intrinsic landscape features are typical of the Campbelltown area and for many decades have been recognised and admired. A year after Meehan undertook his survey at Varroville, Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie - as part of their 1810 tour of the Liverpool, Campbelltown and Camden areas - also visited Townson’s grant. The Governor’s poignant response mentioning the “*highly gratifying view ... of the surrounding country*” is recorded in the quote found in the **Preface** to this report.

It is clear from these early 19th Century descriptions that the Campbelltown landscape was aesthetically a very engaging one, persuading settlers and visitors alike that there was considerable merit in the new Antipodean landscape and even encouraging favourable comparisons with their beloved home countries. In stark contrast to other contemporary descriptions of Australian landscapes where an unfamiliar country was seen as threatening or in need of valiant conquest and taming, these responses suggest a ready and comfortable embracing of the Campbelltown landscape.

Further into the 19th Century there is other evidence that an appreciation of the intrinsic Campbelltown cultural landscape remained strong. The material tendered publicity as part of the 1884 auction of the Denham Court estate included a series of views of the estate by

⁹ JD Lang, *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales*, 2nd Edition, Vol. 11, p. 131

¹⁰ Though D’Arrietta’s estate has long gone it is commemorated by the nearby Spaniards Hill.

¹¹ Letter: Sydney, 12 April 1824 in *The Diaries and Letters of GTWB Boyes*, Vol. 1 1820-1822, Ed. Peter Chapman, OUP, Melbourne, 1985

¹² Ironbark trees are no longer common in this area though many old trees remain along the eastern side of the Campbelltown LGA.

Harold Brees. One of these includes a panorama from Denham Court looking to the south out across a bucolic scene to the Campbelltown valley (Figure 2.3). The sketch successfully captures the juxtaposition between an idyllic English pastoral scene - complete with a distant farm cottage framed by remnant trees - representing the heavily modified agricultural landscape with the vast expanse of indigenous vegetation beyond representing the picturesquely wild landscape. This kind of depiction would have appealed strongly to the aesthetic sensibilities of prospective Victorian-era buyers. Indeed, if the same scenes were offered today the estate landscape would likely still be strongly appealing for the same aesthetic reasons.



Figure 2.3 - This sketch was included in an advertisement for the auction of the Denham Court Estate in 1884. It shows a bucolic pastoral landscape which includes a road (possibly Campbelltown Road) winding over the hills into a semi-cleared valley with a cottage and a line of ridges in the distance. The position of the artist when making the sketch is not known but the characteristics of the topography near Denham Court suggests that the view is looking over the Scenic Hills to the south-west. (1884 Mills and Pile advertising brochure)

William Redfern's Campbellfield Estate was also considered worthy of comment in early records, although more usually for its agricultural qualities than its setting on the eastern side of the main valley, as seen in the following extracts from Bigge's Report into the State of the Colony of NSW following his inspection of the Campbellfield Estate from Airds Road:

"The farm of Mr Redfern, though not consisting of good land, has begun to exhibit the improved system of English husbandry, and reflects credit upon the intelligence and spirit with which the expensive [sic] operation of clearing the land from trees has been conducted" (p.141); and "Mr Redfern's 'remarkably well cleared and well cultivated estate' "(p.85)¹³

Redfern's house Campbellfield was sited relatively low on the original grant of the Estate, above the floodplain but still close to water. As was the case at Varroville, even more panoramic views were available from higher on the respective grants (in the case of Varroville, Bunbury Curran Hill, and in that of Campbellfield, the area near Minto Reservoir);

¹³ Bigge, J.T. *Report...into the State of the Colony of N.S.W.*, 1822. Extract from *The Farm of Mr Redfern*, by Arthur Jones. In Grist Mills, Journal of Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society Inc. Vol 12 No. 2. June, 1999

but locating the house at these high points would have been significantly more difficult to access, have poorer soils, and be far from permanent natural water supplies. Location low on the hillside also allowed views towards the house to be framed by the slope rising up behind in accordance with what is known as the 'Louden Model', and which is now recognised as being an important indicator of the houses of the Colonial Cultural Landscape.¹⁴ In the case of properties in Campbelltown's Scenic Hills, the application of the Louden Model provided further advantages, including excellent views, shelter from cold south-westerly/hot north-westerly winds; the greater likelihood of a suitable flat terrace for the house; or if not; potential for minimal cut and fill to create a level site; and the potential for planting behind the house to provide a picturesque and composed setting for the group.

This setting was usually enhanced by the planting of an ornamental home garden in the paddock surrounding the house, which in many instances included a selection of scientifically interesting or fashionable species. Of particular note was the almost universal inclusion of what have become known as the 'marker trees' of the 19C cultural landscape – Bunya (*Araucaria*) or Hoop Pines. These rose well above the house and skyline to advertise the location of the 19th Century homesteads of the Colonial Cultural Landscape. In many cases these trees have survived – even where the house has been lost, such as at the original Glen Alpine and Glen Lorne properties. The network of marker trees continues to enhance both the understanding and quality of vistas in today's scenic landscape (Figure 2.4 on the following page), since it remains possible to see at least one, and often more than one, Bunya or Hoop Pine from many places within the Scenic Hills and elsewhere in the main valley.

¹⁴ Britton, Geoffrey and Morris, Colleen. Colonial Landscapes of the Cumberland Plain. *ibid*.

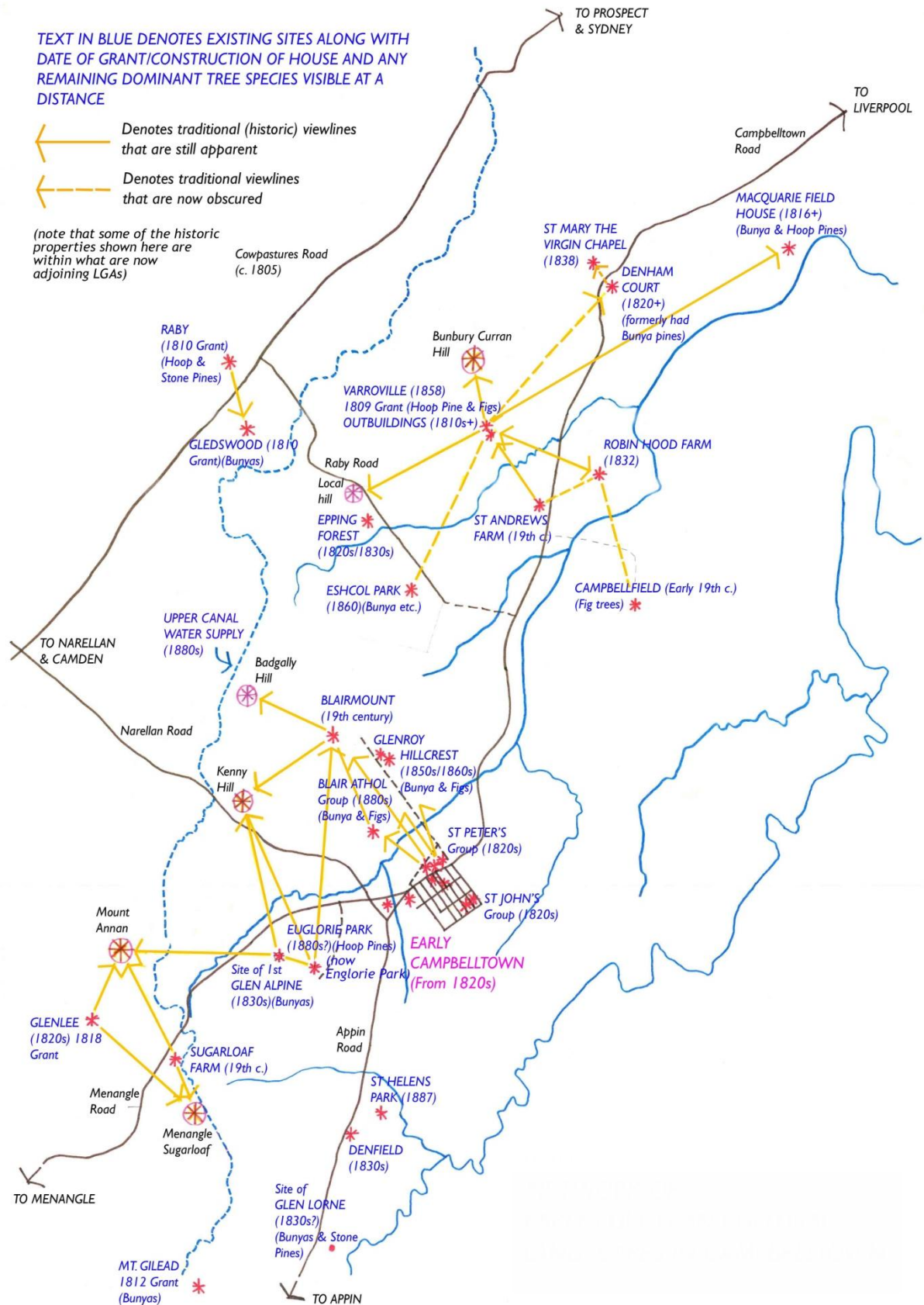


Figure 2.4. Many of the surviving original properties within the Campbelltown LGA have also retained their 'Marker Trees' – tall pines, usually Bunya Bunya or Hoop, which now rise high above the surrounding landscape and continue to provide a contextually rich way of understanding the spatial relationships of the early European Cultural Landscapes in Campbelltown.

Figures 2.5 to 2.30. – the following figures show some of the surviving Marker Trees in the Campbelltown LGA.



Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6 - Varroville (L) was aligned to the trees near Macquarie Fields House (R)



Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8. Blair Athol (L) was aligned to St John's (R)



Figure 2.9. Glenlee is hidden from the main Campbelltown valley but is part of the network of early estates and Marker Trees.



Figure 2.10. This pair of trees marked the southern edge of the main Campbelltown valley and the point of arrival to the Menangle area. They are also sited at the entry to Glenlee (the tree on the eastern side is now a skeleton of the original).



Figure 2.11. Kilbride has retained its fine collection of Marker Trees.



Figure 2.12. Mt Gilead



Figure 2.13. Englorie Park's trees are prominent from the site of the original Glen Alpine Estate



Figure 2.14. Englorie Park



Figure 2.15. Glen Lorne – the house has been demolished but the trees have thrived



Figure 2.16. St Helen's Park



Figure 2.17 and Figure 2.18. The original Glen Alpine's marker trees have survived in an area of open space where the house used to stand. They appear to be in good condition with healthy crowns.

When several trees are present on a site their apparent composition changes as the viewer moves through the landscape creating an ever-changing character to the landscape. The trees at the site of the original Glen Alpine demonstrate this well:



Figure 2.19. The view from the park near the original house shows the Hoop Pine on the left of the group.



Figure 2.20. When viewed from the driveway to Glenlee the Hoop Pine is in the middle of the group.



Figure 2.21. The group is particularly prominent in views from Narellan Road, where the Hoop appears to be on the right side of the group.



Figure 2.22. The view from the freeway near Mount Annan is different again.



Figure 2.23 and Figure 2.24. The trees are also prominent from throughout the more recent landscape such as the streets of Englorie Park (L) and Glen Alpine near Menangle Road (R).



Figure 2.25 and Figure 2.26. Not all Marker Trees have survived in good condition. Some, such as these examples at Blair Athol (L) and on Eagleview Road in E-LU4(R) are in need of attention from an arborist.



Figure 2.27.

Hurley Park lies at the south eastern corner of the Colonial town grid, which rises up the hill to this point. The views from the park are panoramic and Kenny, Badgally and the unnamed hills, together with the strongly defined ridgeline enclosing SH-LU3 are important features in the viewscape. Even at this distance the alternating lines of light green pasture and darker green vegetation are clearly visible and enhance the appreciation of depth in the landscape. Although the Bunya bunya species is known to live for well over 100 years, new and replacement trees have been planted in many locations in what is known as 'succession planting'. This group of young trees in Hurley Park will become a fine landscape group in the future.



Figure 2.28 to Figure 2.30. A succession planting has also been made at Varroville (L). New trees have been planted on some properties such as this property in E-LU3 (centre) and a row of Bunyas has been planted on the ridge leading to the peak of Mount Annan.

2.2 CAMPBELLTOWN'S PHYSIOGRAPHY

When looking at the northern half of the LGA more broadly, the area could be visualised as an enormous slab of land tilted higher in the south-west and lower in the north-east. Fringing this slab is a ring of higher peaks running from the southwest around the western side to the north and forming a well defined, enclosing edge. Familiar names comprising these higher peaks are Mount Sugarloaf, Mount Annan, Kenny Hill, Badgally Hill and Bunbury Curran Hill. Ranges and foothills associated with these peaks are largely cleared as they have traditionally formed a substantial part of early colonial farms. From a distance, the peaks are accentuated as landscape features partly because of their contrast with the yellow-green grasses of the grazing land below.

The eastern edge of the LGA is also elevated with its own distinctive topography created by the carved sandstone gorges of the Georges River falling to the east, with the well-vegetated military and water catchment land beyond forming an effective enclosing horizon to the east. From the west and central parts of the LGA the eastern edges appear as a broad, continuous mantle of eucalypt bushland which forms a striking contrast to the western edges.

Meanwhile the central parts of this land form a broad valley and carry the main drainage lines of Bow Bowing and Bunbury Curran Creeks and their tributaries out to the north before eventually joining the Georges River in the northeast. The same drainage basin also effectively separates the two parts of the present study area.

This valley also coincides with the broad geological boundaries for the Cumberland Plain, with the ecologies of the two landscapes highlighting the different habitats supported by each. The Scenic Hills to the west are characterised by the well modulated and undulating topography typical of the Wianamatta Shale Group while the EESPLs lands fall within a transitional area between the Cumberland Plain and the coastal plateau. This transitional area is known as the Woronora Ramp¹⁵ and its landscape features include Wianamatta Group characteristics as well as those of the more erosion-resistant, and less fertile, Hawkesbury Sandstone Group to the east.

¹⁵ Navin Officer, Campbelltown LGA Aboriginal Heritage Study, Unpublished report for Campbelltown City Council, September 2002, pp.8-9

Reviewing the landscape allows a better understanding of the intrinsic form of the country that makes up the Campbelltown LGA and how this has informed the reasoning behind the construction of the different layers of the cultural landscape such as the early roads, driveways and access tracks and the decisions behind the siting of the colonial farmlands, estates and farmhouses and even the early township of Campbelltown.

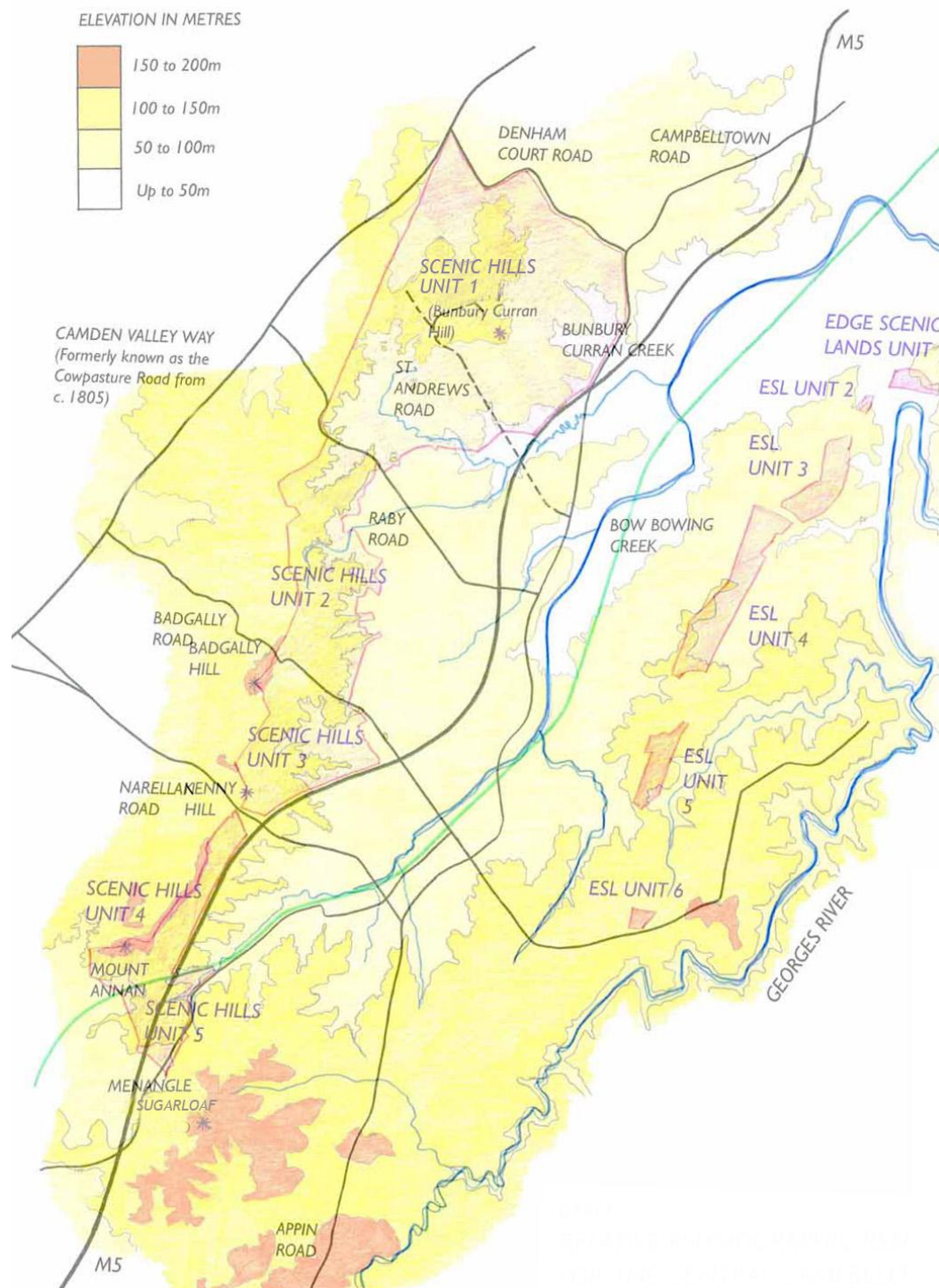


Figure 2.31 – Major landscape features of the main valley of the Campbelltown LGA. The important role that the two study areas play in defining the setting of Campbelltown's urban areas is evident when their location is overlaid on a topographic base map.

2.3 READING CAMPBELLTOWN'S CULTURAL LANDSCAPE TODAY

The history of the Campbelltown LGA is an extraordinarily rich one, and rare in that so much physical evidence of its Colonial past has survived. Likely to have been valued for many thousands of years by Aboriginal people, the good soils and aesthetic values of the Scenic Hills were appreciated early by European settlers in the area and much of the land had been alienated by 1830. Many of these grants were traded and properties amalgamated into larger holdings, and the early shelters, huts and cottages of the first European settlers, many of whom were Irish convicts, were replaced by substantial homesteads built to provide a comfortable country seat and display the wealth of their owners.

The limited amount of development in the area following this early settlement has facilitated the survival of many of these properties, with major subdivision and development not occurring until the late 20th Century. In most cases this development occurred around the earlier properties and although their curtilages were often covered by suburban development, the main house has survived. The physical fabric of these farm homes has been protected through their inclusion as heritage items in Council's planning instruments. The evidence of this layer of development is not limited to the house however, extending over the whole of the landscape where it can still be read and interpreted today. Examples of this evidence includes the way that many of today's main roads follow the boundaries between the original Estates; the survival of remnants of garden and driveway plantings, including the tall Marker Trees; and in places the survival of technologically significant farm infrastructure such as earthworks and dams.

Early carriage driveways are particularly vulnerable to the broadacre subdivision process. In some places traces can be seen of early carriage drives to some of the houses, such as the shadow visible in the early morning of the drive winding up the eastern slope below Varroville. Other drives, including to the Campbellfield Estate, the Original Glen Alpine (both in their original position) and Eschol Park (now overlaid by suburban development) are also still discernible, although not within either Study Area.



Figure 2.32. The shadow of the path of the early carriage-path winding up to Varroville from its original entrance on Campbelltown Road is still discernable from the south-western freeway in the early morning light (arrowed). Varroville's Hoop Pine is a feature of this viewpoint.



Figure 2.33 – The explorer Charles Sturt was one of the early owners of Varroville and he is reputed to have created a dam in each paddock of the property, an initiative that was one of the earliest known attempts at water conservation and management in the rural landscape in the early Colony. Many of the dams surviving on the original estate demonstrate characteristics that suggest that they were made by hand and is so, are likely to be part of this system.

The evidence of earlier phases of development on the eastern side of the main valley is less prominent than found in the Scenic Hills. This is due both to the extent of Redfern's Campbellfields Estate and to the porous and less nutritious soils with a lack of natural water sources in the EESPLs. The early aerial photographs reveal a low-density rural landscape with many undeveloped and uncleared lots remaining in 1956.

The Campbellfield Estate had remained substantially intact until the mid 1880s, when it was comprehensively subdivided for small-lot farms and villages. Although few lots were developed for any use other than small-scale farmlets, the patterns of these early subdivisions can still be seen through the alignment of the main local distributor roads today. One notable element is the survival of evidence of an early township to be known as 'Caledonia' within part of the area covered by Landscape Unit E-LU3.

A small number of late 19th/early 20th Century farm houses and cottages from this early period of development has survived, including a very good example of a modest stone cottage in Mercedes Road within the Caledonia township.

The Campbelltown LGA also demonstrates a very important, yet still usually overlooked, landscape element: the quality, integrity and extent of its planning schemes. Its location was formalised by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1813 and Campbelltown can thus lay claim to being a 'Macquarie Town'. The Georgian town plan was aligned carefully to maximise views over the most prominent elements of the Scenic Hills and residents and visitors can continue to enjoy the aesthetic benefits of this early planning decision.

More recent planning initiatives have also contributed to the unique character of the landscape. This layer of the landscape is usually dismissed as being “too recent to be valuable”, but as the recent Minto Renewal Project has demonstrated, it is not invulnerable to being overwritten by yet another layer. This urban development is not within the areas studied in this report, and is mentioned here to provide an example of the vulnerability of even the most recent and seemingly robust landscapes to change.

Of relevance to this Study however is the strong relationship between the open space networks within the urban areas and the scenic and landscape qualities of the Study Areas. The town plan placed a high priority on the protection of visual connections through open space links which have resulted in directed views to focal points of the surrounding landscape and has allowed many of the scenic qualities of the landscape to remain highly accessible and readily interpretable by the whole community.

Figure 2.34 to Figure 2.37. The Study Area contains many Items of local, State and potentially national heritage significance.



Figure 2.34. Varroville (SH-LU1).



Figure 2.35. Stone cottage – Mercedes Road (E-LU3).



Figure 2.36. Sydney Water's Upper Canal is part of Sydney's water supply system and extends from Mt Sugarloaf (SH-LU5) to Denham Court (SH-LU1).



Figure 2.37. Eagleview Cottage – Eagleview Road in E-LU4.



Figure 2.38. The open space network established as part of the late 20th Century suburban landscape has created many opportunities for engagement with the scenic qualities of the Study Areas, even from a considerable distance. This example is from an open space link adjacent to Englorie Park, which enjoys a wide panorama to the west over the Scenic Hills. The prominent hill towards the right is Badgally Hill. Note the generous width of the open space, lack of intrusive development and excellent visual connectivity between the viewer and the Scenic Hills.



Figure 2.39. Allowing development to intrude into the line of a vista, even if only by a comparatively modest scaled cottage, has an adverse impact on the quality of the landscape. Earlier subdivision designs took care to prevent such interruptions, whereas more recent development often seems to have been designed without consideration of the implications of allowing development to intrude into these views.

