

ANDREW ALLEN WITH SAM STEPHENSON, CLAIRE LYNCH AND MICHAEL SULLIVAL ON CURIOUS CAMPBELLTOWN PODCAST ON 15 MARCH 2023

AA Hello listeners we have a special kind of treat for you today. With me are members of Campbelltown Library's Local Studies Team. I would like to introduce Sam Stephenson, Claire Lynch and Michael Sullivan to our Curious Campbelltown podcast. Good morning team.

SS / CL / MS

Good morning Andrew.

AA We think that we have the best jobs in the library and we felt that it would be great if we could share with you what makes our jobs so amazingly wonderful. Now we all agree that Campbelltown has such a fascinating, quirky but really long history and we feel that we want to get these wonderful stories out there and tell the world about them. So team let's have a chat about some of the stuff that we do. Let's start by talking about the best part of our jobs, what we really love about our jobs. Anyone want to start.

CL I'll start. I really the job because your always learning something new and there's always so many interesting queries that come in from the public that you can sink your teeth into and you are always finding out stuff that you never knew before. The investigative part of it is just fantastic, I love it.

AA I agree, there's always stuff that you are learning every day. The stuff that we deal with, the people that we meet. With me I guess doing oral histories, I get to meet so many interesting people from the area. People who have been here for like all of their lives and they tell me their amazing stories. But it can be someone who has only been here recently too. I have met some really interesting people who have just arrived in Campbelltown. They've got a really fascinating story to tell from where they have come from. So I suppose doing oral histories for me is one of the good things that I do. Just doing research, I love to research and Claire I know you do. In fact Michael and Sam I know we all love to sort of research stuff.

SS My favourite part of the job is I guess that no two days are ever the same and interesting and I think that because I grew up in Campbelltown I have been here all my life, it invokes so many memories for me good and bad. I think that there would never be another job that I could look at a photograph and know what it was without a title or whatever I can look at it and go yes I know where that is. I will never ever have another job like that. I can think I grew up with that person or look at a newspaper and I can remember when that happened. I have appeared in newspapers, I have photos of family members on the database and I think that is really special.

MS I've never thought about it like that at all.

AA I've never thought about that either. I'm just a ring in but you have lived here all your life.

MS I'm just a ring in too.

CL You're not a ring in Michael.

MS I came here in 77. My favourite part of the job is bringing back the past. I love finding old photos and fixing them up. An old photo that has been damaged and clean it up and see a face that is from the 50s or 40s fresh with their eyes staring back at you and wonder what their life was like. Sometimes you know what their life was like.

AA Writing a blog for me too has been something that I have really enjoyed doing. It has been going since about 2011 and it's had a really positive response. Just all the stories, Campbelltown has so many stories that you can write about, there is always something. It's probably struggling now because it's gone for twelve years, we've probably run out of stories but there have been so many. I love researching that and writing about it, looking at all the comments that people make about it and you know that they are out there and reading it so that's another think that I love.

MS One of us will come up with an idea for a blog and Andrew will say I've already done that ten years ago or something.

CL / SS

And we all sing King Blog!

5 mins

AA It's amazing you can just do a Google search on something and it will come up.

SS I'm surprised it's been going for twelve years.

AA Twelve years with no intentions of it going for twelve years.

MS It's become such a fantastic encyclopaedia of Campbelltown too, incredible.

CL Often about subjects that haven't had a lot written about them and because we've taken a deep dive on a particular thing it's a really good resource.

AA So for people who don't know about it it's called the History Buff and you can access it from our Campbelltown Library website. So go to the Local Studies link and then when you do that it's called The History Buff. So that's how you get access to that. Oral histories are also on there, so that most of what we do can be accessed from the Local Studies section in our Campbelltown Library web page. What about favourite stories that we have come across over the years in our research on enquiries. Does anyone have any favourite stories?

CL Mine is one that I came across fairly recently. I knew part of the investigative part of the job. I knew the story about the ghost of Amelia Fowler that was supposedly

haunting Eschol Park House and when I heard the story of how she had died one thing about it that just really ring true. I started to investigate her death and the way she was supposed to have died was she caught her foot in her hooped skirt and fallen down the stairs of Eschol Park House. A hooped skirt, it just sounded more like Gone with the Wind to me, so when I started to investigate that I found out that she hadn't died there at all, she had moved to Queensland with her new husband and actually died not long after her marriage and died at Inkerman Downs Station where she had moved with her husband. She has no death record in either Queensland or New South Wales and she has no burial record anywhere although there is a memorial stone to her in the cemetery. I think it is more of a memorial stone than a headstone. The only way I found out about that was through the use of Trove which is such a wealth of information. There was a death notice for her in The Herald which explained where she had died. So I found that story particularly interesting. Debunking a myth is always lots of fun.

AA That's what we do a lot of because I remember watching that story on a TV program called The Extraordinary I think it was called presented by Warwick Moss. I actually remember it and it made an impression. There is this beautiful girl falling down the steps and it was at Eschol Park, but we have sort of proved that wrong.

MS My favourite story comes from the Macquarie Cinema. It was in Browne Street and the proprietor of that loved to put on vaudevillian acts before the show as well as the cartoon and a newsreel. He would quite often get an act before. This was in the 30s and one time an ape appeared on stage and the ape was supposed to fire a rifle into some fruit. The ape didn't seem to like this and attacked the proprietor a Mr Nicholas and the ape starts waving the fully loaded rifle around. It goes off above the audience and a bullet actually lodges in one of the walls.

CL How insane, it's a wonder no-one was killed.

MS I've heard this story a few times and no-one ever says oh it was a guy in a suit they all swear it was an ape.

AA That is ridgy didge apparently, I have been assured that is a true story it wasn't made up.

10 mins

MS Because all the old-timers they point to the hole in the wall. Because it was still there in 1979 when the building was demolished. It looked such a lovely place.

CL Imagine that happening now, you're sitting in the nice Narellan Cinema and an ape comes on stage with a loaded gun you would think you were tripping.

AA This is what I mean about Campbelltown, it could only happen in Campbelltown. There are lots of weird stories like that. Mine are a little bit sad but they still my favourite stories. Finding out about what happened to our first Mayor. So Campbelltown's first Mayor was a man names John Ahern and for quite a while we didn't know what happened to him. He kind of just disappeared off the scene.

A lady contacted me one day and she had information on John and it turned out that he committed suicide I think it was in the Arncliffe area. So it was good to learn about what happened to him but I guess it was a really sad story too. But just on the thing of weird Campbelltown. Campbelltown had a poltergeist story something similar to other poltergeist stories around the country that happened. Out at Menangle Park there was a house that was pelted by stones and this went on for days or even weeks and they never really found out what happened. The family couldn't rest and couldn't sleep for days on end and they never really found out why this house was attacked. It was a family by the name of Carroll, so they could be related to you Sam. There's a story about a mother and a daughter who lived in Allman Street in Campbelltown and the kids used to think they were witches and they used to walk past their house and they were freaked out by these two women and they wore weird clothes all the time and only came out at night. They freaked out the local children. I thought that was fascinating. Also the lady in the stocks. There were stocks in Mawson Park, we're talking early days of Campbelltown and one particular lady was charged for swearing in Queen Street and she ended up in the stocks as punishment for that.

SS It's kind of got a really macabre past hasn't it Campbelltown. I forget the name of the bushranger who was shipped out here on a train after he was executed.

AA Harry Manns, Claire is a bit of an expert on Harry Manns.

SS And the fact that people were watching the hanging that's crazy.

AA There were about half a dozen in the one year.

SS Is that because it was up at the courthouse?

AA I think it was related to the location of the courthouse I believe so. Any interesting people that we have had contact with over the years.

SS They come hand in hand with the job. I feel like everyone that we cross paths with are interesting.

MS I really liked a gentleman called Norm Campbell. He was such a gentleman and so softly spoken and he had such an interesting life. I first met him in 1990s and he came in and he was identifying all the photographs that we didn't know who the people were and he was so knowledgeable and it was only over the years that I had seen photos of him being the captain of the local fire brigade or this photo is by Norm Campbell and it is in the newspapers. So he reported for the newspapers. He bought a camera in the 60s and he even did the newsreels for Channel 2 and Channel 7 and later in life he didn't stop. We often talked about computer stuff. He had bought a really amazing computer called Omega that I had as well so we bonded over that. No-one else that I knew, knew of this computer but he had one and he was in his 70s/80s and he just loved technology. One time he walked into the Macarthur Advertiser I think it was and wanted to see their computer system because he was so interested and wiped out a day's work of theirs so he was banned.

15 mins

AA It's true that when people like that pass away, it's like a library has been destroyed because of all that knowledge that they have and that would apply to Norm. He was always willing to share his stories and had a sharp memory right till the end. He was one of the first people, he could have been the first person on the scene when the Glenfield siege in 1968 happened. When I was talking with him he had detailed memories of what happened that day at the Glenfield siege when Wally Mellish boarded himself up and was there for days and the police were trying to make him come around. So Norm had fantastic memories of those sort of news events with his job.

MS The police also used Norm's photographs from car accidents to investigate too. There was one plane crash and he was sent out there to take forensic sort of photos and they discovered that the plane had actually crashed because of a twenty cent coin lodged in one of the rudder controls. He had such an effect on the history of Campbelltown. Growing up in the depression and he had gone right through. He was born in Lithgow Street.

AA One of the famous Georgian terraces. He lived there when he was a boy. I think even in adulthood too. Doing the oral histories you meet some fascinating people. One that stands out was Peter Benson from Ingleburn who passed away sadly only quite recently. Peter was a dentist and in his interview he told me some experiences of patients that he had. He was into hypnotism and he hypnotised Clive Tregear who was one of the Mayors of Campbelltown and he worked. He said to Clive now imagine yourself in Antarctica and Clive was there shivering away, it's amazing a very clever man and an interesting man to talk to. He remembered when the Sydney Harbour Bridge was being built he would go up on one of the hills near where he lived in Ingleburn and see the Sydney Harbour Bridge as it was being built. Hard to imagine. John Hennessy who was also a Mayor, not a Mayor he was an Alderman on Campbelltown Council, he was an interesting man to interview. We actually filmed him at his home one day, it was probably the first time that I had ever shown any emotion when I interviewed somebody. He was talking about his days at a place called Bindoon which was an orphanage in Western Australia. John had come out from England as a boy and was sent straight to this boy's home. He went through some really difficult times and he was very emotional about it and I became emotional. He had such an interesting life and he has sadly passed away too.

MS He took a lot of kids under his wing at that place and tried to make a better life for them. I hadn't realised because I had spent ten years doing the newspaper indexing and he was in the paper a lot trying to rectify wrong and I didn't know the extent of what he had been through then.

20 mins

AA Then you have people like David Milliken who we interviewed and he did sort of see the funny side of things. It's fascinating how people view history. He could sort of see the funny side of life, the characters of Campbelltown. He made us just laugh the whole time. We still listen back to David's interview and still have a chuckle about things.

CL He's a very funny guy.

AA Any enquiries that stand out over the years that we have had that we have had to do research for. Any interesting enquiries that we have received.

CL I can talk about a gentleman who came in with an enquiry about his family history which is something we also work on particularly related to Campbelltown. He was related to Gilbert he was the tracker that had discovered where the body of Fred Fisher was found. He was the tracker brought in to try and find Fisher's body. That tracker's European name was Gilbert but his aboriginal name was Namut. This fellow was related to him so we went back and actually proved, but he was also to curious know about his mother's maiden name was Luland. In the Fisher's story the constable who worked with that tracker was named Luland and he was a bit curious about whether there was a connection there as well. It turned out that there was. Not only was he related to the constable he was always related to the tracker. In my opinion that makes him Fisher royalty. I just couldn't believe that he could be related to two people who played such a major part in Fred Fisher's story. He was really chuffed that we could prove that.

AA What are the chances though?

CL What are the chances that four generations later that he would have both of those people in his family tree, it was extraordinary.

AA That's incredible. Something that always amuses me and fascinates me is the number of times I have been asked to find out information about a haunted house. Quite regularly I have had people come in, quite normal sane people asking me to help them with finding out why their house might be haunted. It's almost impossible to really give them an answer and I have never been able to do it of course. Sometimes I can find something out about the house a small detail but it doesn't give you an answer as to why it might be haunted. But it is just fascinating. I would say four or five times over the years I have had people coming in to say they are desperate and what can you find out about my haunted house. But also we get challenged a lot and there are times where we just can't answer questions. We used to have plaques on Milby Hospital. Milby Hospital is where Fisher's Ghost Restaurant became. It was a hospital in the 1930s and 1940s and there used to be plaques on the wall. A number of people who were born in the hospital and had their name on the plaque wanted to know where the plaques were. I did research on it but I was never able to come up with an answer on what happened to those plaques. Sometimes we are beaten by the enquiry, we can't find out the answer. Place names, I remember being asked where the Rock Ponds were, there was a place called the Rock Ponds in the 1800s. After hours and hours of research I still wasn't able to come up with an answer. So if anybody out there, any of our listeners know where the Rock Ponds are we would love to hear from you or the plaques from Milby Hospital.

MS I remember, we do a lot of searching through newspapers for people and I remember looking for a wedding photo of a couple and they told me that they got married and the year. I went through the microfilm went through the days where

they advertised these sort of things and couldn't find it on that month or the next month and the month after that. A year later I found their wedding photos. I'm not sure what happened there.

25 mins

CL Were they sure they got their date correct?

MS I don't know.

SS People do get dates mixed up. You can spend days looking in the newspapers for something and it will be a different month.

MS People are sure that it's in this date but turns out probably 98% of the time it isn't. One of our recent enquiries was about a spoon. Where did this spoon come from, what's the story of this spoon? I'll describe the spoon, it had SC & PC written on it and Campbelltown underneath and a swan logo. So we knew it must have been something to do with Council. I googled it, the first place I went to was google. It also has Friendship Binds all Ages. It wasn't a school. People at home may be screaming I know what it is. This is where the people that come into the library and people that are volunteers and people in the Historic Society can help us out. We don't have all the information and they said it was the Senior Citizens and Pensioners Club and so we gave pictures to the Seniors Club and people that have been there for years have never seen this spoon. Never seen it at all which is really curious. Maybe it was a trial run or something, it's pretty rare.

AA There's also enquiries that we get that are regular ones too. There are some subjects that just keep coming up. Obviously Fisher's Ghost is one of those that we keep getting asked about. I'm always getting asked to be part of a video and tell the story of Fisher's Ghost so I think I know it in detail now. Another one that we keep getting good feedback for and people wanting to know more about it is a building called Universal Powerhouse or some people know it as Saturn's rings. It's a building for those of you that don't know it sits on top of the hill in Eschol Park and it was built about the late 1970s by a man named Stefan Dzwonnik, that's probably not how you pronounce it but that's how it is kind of spelt. The hill today is called Mount Universe and it was supposed to be a mecca for a worldwide movement. The building was based on the Rings of Saturn and we did a blog post on it and it receives more comments and questions about it than any other blog post that we did. Some things like that just fascinate people. We're always answering questions about those sort of things. Favourite photos, do any of our team have a favourite photo?

MS I do yes. There are many many photos and a lot of them are on our database as well. So if you want to look up the photos at home just go to Campbelltown Library's website chiefly the Catalogue of Campbelltown Library. Go to the right where there is a dropdown menu and select archives and then just type in the key words. There have been people that have given a lot of photos to Campbelltown Library. Hugh Bairnsfather with his Kodachrome slides, glorious colour slides of trains, festival, Sherwood Hills as it was. Geoff Eves who was a professional photographer in Campbelltown. But I think one of my favourite

photos is of Raymond Veness who was a chemist in Queen Street. It was a photo donated by Michael Veness and it has just got the most glorious advertising. It's within his shop. There are two photos, one is outside the shop and one is inside the shop and it's just like an Aladdin's cave of cornucopia of advertising and special things. No matter how many times I see it there's always something new to see. He's got a cash register that is the most wonderful looking things. It's so ornate with scrolling patterns on the side.

30 mins

The other day I was looking at it and there a big tall cardboard advertisement for Ipana. It's a toothpaste. Have any of you heard of Ipana. I didn't connect the two. Not only is it Ipana but it is the brand that Bucky Beaver advertises. It's such a window into the world at that time when that was the biggest selling toothpaste.

SS I love any photograph by Geoff Eves, I feel like he can transport you back in time. The way he took a photo captured people, it captured the fashion, it captured the cars that were driven, shops in Queen Street it just captured every aspect of life in Campbelltown. I feel like you can look at any Geoff Eves photo and it will take you straight back there.

AA There comes a period too where there's not a lot of photographs. Like the late 60s early 70s period too.

SS He took a lot of wedding photos, the majority of people's wedding photos in Campbelltown.

MS It's like it needed to be recorded and he went out and he took the thing that no-one else was taking. He just thought no-one has taken this building I will capture this.

SS It can be nothing special but it's been captured.

MS You know the funny thing is that when I have to put up a photo on line or something I normally tweak it or darken or lighten it or something like that. I have never had to alter a Geoff Eves photo at all, it's perfect the contrast and they were taken ages ago.

SS He used to get up high and take photos looking down.

AA So for listeners out there I you want to have a look at the photos we have on our library system, type in Geoff Eves and you can see what Sam is talking about. I definitely agree.

CL I think my favourite photos, not one in particular but a number are the photos of Queen Street back in the 1800s. I just love looking at that wide street and it was probably dirt and then the buggies and the sulkies and photos of the shops that were there and usually with the shop keepers standing out the front looking very formal. The butcher standing out the front of his butcher shop and I would just love to be able to go back in time to see Queen Street because it is such a contrast to what Queen Street is today. The extraordinary beginnings, it was such a tiny, tiny town to what it has come now it is quite amazing.

- AA** You're right it was a different world, it was so slow.
- SS** What blows my mind is how late Campbelltown got electricity. How long they struggled without it.
- MS** Was that in the 30s.
- AA** It was 1924
- MS** So it hasn't even been a hundred years.
- AA** No the centenary is coming up.
- CL** That's amazing, and the man coming around to empty the dunnies of a night time.
- AA** And the lamplighter. Mr Bamford used to light the lamps.
- CL** It's like something out of a movie but that's how Campbelltown was.
- AA** In a hundred years' time they will be laughing about what we put up with.

35 mins

- CL** What do you mean they went to work every day?
- AA** One of the photos we have in our collection, it just came to mind actually just a second ago. In our Local Studies office we have a large photograph of all the Alderman at a particular time on Council and it's a wonderful old photograph. One day we were going through our photos and there was a photograph of Bursill's shop. Bursill's had an old shop, a general store in the main street. In that photograph, this particular photograph we have in our office of all these Councillors in a shop window on a board kind of thing. That was pretty amazing.
- MS** There is one too that I love, Lacks Hotel and it's of I presume a dad and his two sons after the Fisher's Ghost parade some time in the 80s it was taken. If you look closer there is a horse looking out of the pub through the window.
- AA** If you get a chance to look at Tom Swan's photographs too, Tom Swan was a fairly prolific photographer. He lived at Wedderburn and he often would photograph girls like having a tea part with their dolls and they are just the most amazing photographs. Anything by Tom Swan I love. One of my other favourites is probably our oldest photograph and that was taken of Macquarie Fields House. Part of the army the Cadet Corps I think they were called and they are all sitting down in front of Macquarie Fields House. It was taken about 1866 and it was just an amazing photograph to look out. That's on our library system too. What about objects that we have in our collection. We've got a few haven't we?
- MS** I quite like the Steve Roach collection it was entrusted quite a long time ago from Camden Fine Arts Gallery. It's got brushes and pens and tubes of oil paint there that have been squeezed by this amazing artist.
- SS** If only the objects could talk and tell what happened.

AA Steve Roach who we are talking about disappeared in 1993. He was last seen in Ingleburn CBD. He took off in his Datsun and has never been seen since. So Steve went missing and the car went missing. Nobody knows what happened to him. He was a wonderful artist and we are lucky enough to have a few of his artworks in the library.

MS We have his slouch hat too and photo albums and correspondence.

AA An object that I am very proud to have in our collection and we acquired it only a year or two ago was the very first edition of the Campbelltown Herald which was in 1880. That was the very first issue and it is the only surviving hard copy that's known to exist. So we got off the Macarthur Advertiser, they donated it to us and we did some conservation work on it and it's now part of our collection. So that's one thing I really love.

CL One item that I find particularly poignant in our collection is the trophy that was awarded to Caroline Burns who won Miss Spirit that was back in 1987. She would have been 17 years old and unfortunately Caroline.... Just the fact that we have got her trophy I think is one of those bitter sweet sort of things.

MS There's a photo of her too isn't there?

AA We've got a couple of photos of Caroline.

MS A life full of promise you see in those photos.

AA Another thing I love is what we call the Payten Diaries. They were diaries written by James Payten who was a farmer at Woodbine and this was in the late nineteenth century. It's very valuable to have an account of what life was like at that time and in Campbelltown. They were donated to the library and we also have them on microfilm. That's something I'm very proud to hold.

MS One of the largest artefacts that we have is the post from the Fisher's Ghost Creek Bridge. It was used as the finishing post for some picnic races in 1970 and unfortunately the whole race got flooded out and they thought it was because it was named after Fred Fisher.

CL He was supposedly not happy about it.

MS So they put the post away for the next year and everything was fine. And they thought they'd bring the post out again...and it rained even worse that year and the horses practically had to swim down the racecourse. And it rained every year for the next five years after that using the post so they put the post away. I think Deidre O'Dowd, the race organiser took it home.

CL Didn't her garage flood.

MS It did.

AA Leaking pipes in the garage or something...

MS Gallons and gallons of water she got overcharged. She only knew when the bill came in. So we've got that in our collection.

AA He's got a lot to answer for doesn't he Fred.

CL Hauntings and floods.

MS And it does still affect the weather doesn't it.

AA: Oh yeah, sure enough when I drag it out for a school tour it'll pour down rain so he's still at it, old Fred.

Well that just about comes to the end of our podcast episode. Hope you enjoyed our stories. Pop in and say g'day to us. If you have any questions for us anything you need researched we're only too happy to do that. Yeah, just come in and say hi.

That ends our podcast. Thank you to my team, hope you really enjoyed it. And we'll say goodbye for today.

CL/SS/MS

Thank you Andrew. Bye.