

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION, 2009 (SEASON 2). “A SMALL MISERABLE HUT”, CAMDEN ESTATE.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with Information Leaflet 1, which provides the historical background for the project and the goals of the test-excavation completed in September 2008 (Season 1).

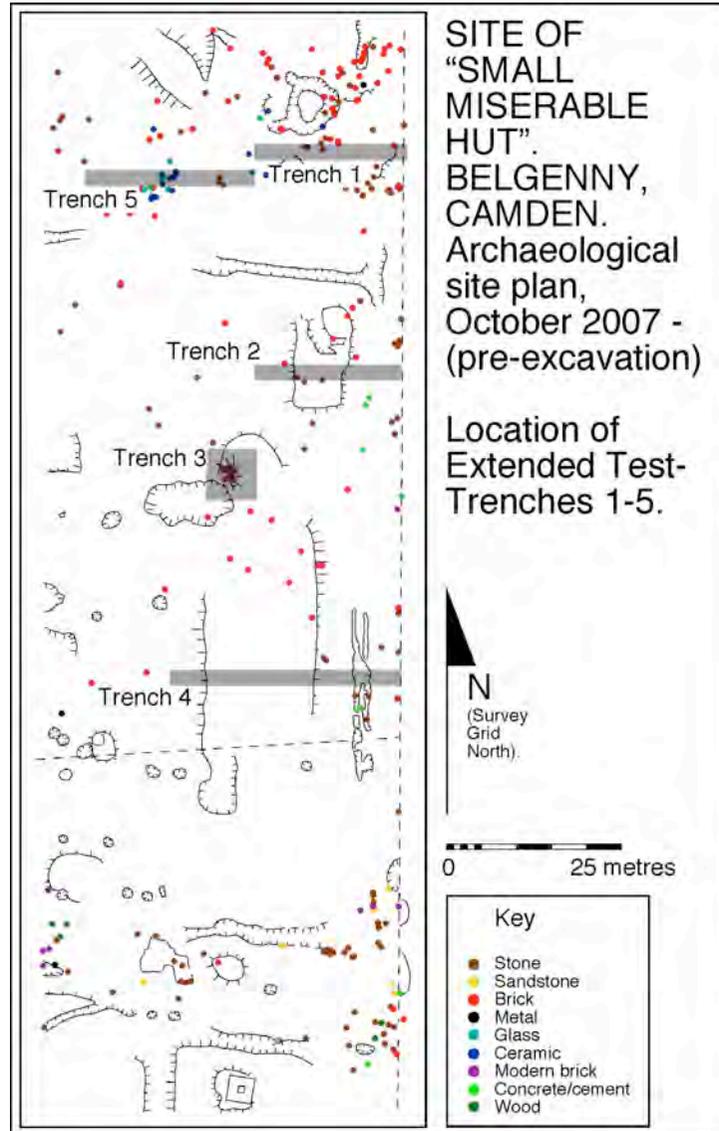
Information Leaflet 1 can be downloaded from: www.higginbotham.com.au

Follow links to: [On the trail of the Macarthur Family – Part 2](#)

Results of Test-Excavation (Season 1 – 2008).

Test-Trenches 1-5 revealed the location of the three buildings shown on the 1840 Estate Plan. The two northerly buildings were timber-framed and probably slab structures with foundations of stone and brick (Trenches 1 and 2). They are similar to surviving houses on the Camden Park Estate, originally used to house estate workers.

The third structure was of more simple construction. It was still a timber-framed building, but the base timbers were placed directly on the earth. It had a stone fireplace at its western end (Trench 3). This building was identified as the “small miserable hut”, because it closely correlates with the 1835-1836 painting by Conrad Martens. During excavation, the team also found fragments of Chinese porcelain, which were imported into NSW from 1792 to the early 1820s. John Macarthur was one of the NSW Corps, who originally developed this trade, so it is a significant find on this site.



This plan shows the location of Trenches 1-5 in relation to the surveyed archaeological features and other finds. Additional plans can be downloaded from the website. www.higginbotham.com.au

The “small miserable hut”.

The 2008 test-excavations stirred up a debate about the “small miserable hut”. If the archaeology was correct in showing a timber framed building, was it so miserable? A post-built hut might be considered miserable, because it would have differed little from the government huts erected in Parramatta for convict accommodation. But, taking the 1835-6 Conrad Martens painting together with the archaeology, we appear to have a timber framed hut, with slab walls and a bark roof – hardly miserable, since similar structures are still in use on the Camden Park Estate today, though the roof is usually now corrugated iron.



The front verandah of a slab cottage on the Camden Park Estate, similar to the buildings uncovered in Trenches 1 and 2 in 2008.

Goals for Season 2 – 2009.

The question that was not addressed in 2008 (because of time constraints) was the nature of the building site indicated by the rectangular depression to the south of the fireplace in Trench 3. It was assumed that the rectangular depression belonged to a building added to the one with the fireplace, but it could be the other way around.

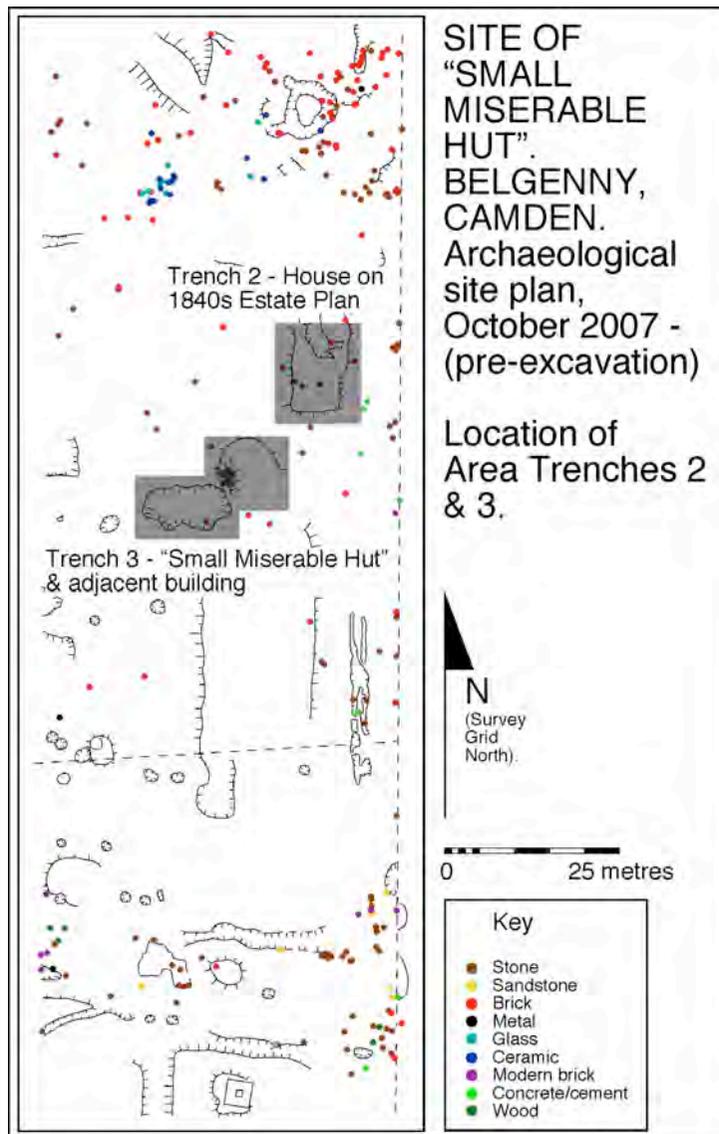
So the goal of the area excavations in 2009 is to fully investigate the sites of the “small miserable hut” and its adjacent building to resolve not only which is the original hut and which is the addition, but also to establish the uses of each building from the structural evidence and artifacts recovered (Area Trench 3).

In addition the excavation team will survey a large area to determine whether there were any other buildings in the vicinity of the three buildings shown on the 1840 Estate Plan (see Leaflet 1).

This will provide important evidence to assist us in understanding the development of the Camden Park Estate around Belgenny Farm in its formative years from 1805 to the early 1820s

We know the location of the “small miserable hut” (1810) and the cottage built for the family by Henry Kitchen, architect, in 1821. But we do not know the location of the “cottage” mentioned in 1815, nor the “present residence” of John Macarthur, mentioned in 1818. The other important reference is to a wool store, erected in 1813.

Through this survey, the team hopes to identify the other buildings, to enable a more clear understanding of how the estate grew, and also narrow down the location of the cottages mentioned in 1815 and 1818.



*In the 2009 season of excavation the team will concentrate on the excavation of the "small miserable hut" and its adjacent building.
Additional plans can be downloaded from the website.
www.higginbotham.com.au*

Planning ahead.

The fieldwork provides a valuable opportunity for tertiary students and others to take part in an archaeological excavation.

The excavation also provides an important resource for Y11 students at Camden High School in their study of History for HSC. You can visit their website at: <http://belgennydig.pbwiki.com/>

With the completion of the archaeological excavations, the Belgenny Farm Trust and the Camden Park Environmental Education Centre plan to expand their existing education and community programs.

The site of the “small miserable hut” and its adjacent building, and perhaps also the site of one of the other 1840s cottages, will be put on display, to form a valuable addition to visitor appreciation of the historical farm complex of Belgenny Farm. The sites will be linked by interpretation panels and other educational resources.

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