

BULLI MASONIC TEMPLE

As the family name of ORGAN seems to have been mentioned quite frequently in connection with the Bulli Masonic Temple I think that it would be appropriate to start with this family and explain just how they fit in with the land and Masonic buildings at Bulli.

In England the family name of Organ can be traced back many centuries but I am only concerned with a small part of their history in New South Wales, and that part only covering the family of Elias Organ, a carpenter, and his wife, Elizabeth Organ who arrived in the ship "Bussorah Merchant" on the Third of September, 1839.

Several years prior to this two of the sons of Elias and Elizabeth Organ had enlisted in the 28th Regiment of Foot (North Gloucestershire), they were William and Thomas in the course of their duties had been shipped to New South Wales as members of guard detachments for service in that colony. They both served at several different locations throughout New South Wales and in 1839 found themselves in Wollongong and were joined there by the remainder of their family from England. Both William and Thomas both received their discharge from the Army on the 1st April 1840 on payment of £20 and the whole family were then re-united.

Another of Elias and Elizabeth Organ's sons was named George whose wife was named Maria and they had two children, a son William Henry and a daughter Emily and they accompanied the rest of the family when they travelled out to New South Wales as bounty immigrants in 1839.

George seems to have been the most successful of the family in all his business dealings and it is this side of the Organ family which owned the land on which the Masonic Temple is built at Bulli, this allied to the fact that over the years several of the Organ family have been members of the Craft, is probably the reason that the name Organ and the Masonic Temple at Bulli are linked together.

The land mentioned was an original grant of 300 acres to one William Bowman and was situated in what was then called Fairy Meadow and dated 11th August 1841. Fairy Meadow at that time was an area extending from what we now call Bulli southwards to Wollongong, the grant was situated in South Bulli.

On the 10th March, 1849 George Organ managed to purchase 152 acres of this grant for the sum of £164 and it is a small portion of that 152 acres on which the Masonic Temple is built.

If we take a look at the village of Bulli from say 1860 onwards, this period coinciding with the opening of coal mines in the area and a fairly heavy increase

in the population, we would be struck by the increase in all the amenities necessary to support this influx of people who had come to work in the region. Schools, Churches, Houses, Shops etc. were being constructed and occupied, some of these buildings were only of a temporary nature while others were more substantial and built to last.

In an era when there was no such thing as Government Welfare Benefits it was left to organisations such as Friendly Societies to assist the working man and their families in case of lack of work and in times of sickness and want. The first society at Bulli was the Bulli and Bellambi Benefit Society inaugurated at a meeting of 28 people in Ziems' Royal Hotel in 1865. At that time there was no society nearer than Sydney. Each member paid 2 shillings per month and this entitled them to 15/- per week after a certain waiting time, this of course only one of the benefits given by these societies which filled a great need at that time.

Following quickly behind the formation of this first Friendly Society were others. The Sons of Temperance Lodge soon followed by the Star of Freedom Lodge and for the Ladies the Lily of the Valley. The Belmore Band of Hope was formed in 1870. The Forrester's Court opened in 1874 and the Marquis of Argyle Lodge of the Protestant Alliance Friendly Society the same year. The Good Templars Lodge was formed at the Primitive Methodist Church in 1876.

These Lodges and Friendly Societies not only provided assistance in time of need but they were in many instances the greatest source of social activities for the local population. They held Annual Picnics at various venues, athletic gatherings at the old Bulli brick paddock when bands played and hundreds of people attended on such occasions as *New Years Day, Anniversary Day, Boxing Day* etc., etc.

It was obvious that a meeting place of some description was badly needed to accommodate the activities of all these Friendly Societies and Lodges and the first steps to achieve this object was taken by the Pride of Illawarra Lodge, No. 1752, of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, Friendly Society of New South Wales.

This first step was taken in 1883 when the three trustees of the Pride of Illawarra Lodge, Mr. William Ryan, Mr. James Salisbury and Mr. William Williams, all miners and all living at Woonona, purchased from Mr. George Organ a piece of land in Bulli for the sum of seventy five pounds sterling, the transaction taking place on the 15th day of September, 1883. The solicitor who prepared all the documents etc. was Mr. Francis Woodward of Wollongong.

A full description of the said land is contained in the First Schedule of the Conveyance certificate numbered 1172 and 1173, dated 15th September 1883, and is as follows:-

"All that allotment of land situated at Bulli in the County of Camden in the said colony of New South Wales, being part of one hundred and fifty two acres of land, conveyed to the said vendor by indenture bearing date, the tenth day of March, 1849 and made between John Rose Holden therein described of the first part, Arthur Huffington and Elizabeth his Wife therein described of the second part and the said vendor of the third part being registered number 379, Book 16 and being Lot 18 of the sub division by the said vendor of the said one hundred and fifty two acres, commencing on the West Side of the Main Road from Bulli aforesaid to Wollongong aforesaid at the South East corner of allotment seventeen of the said sub division sold to Thomas Tressider by the said vendor being a point distance forty feet South, from the South East corner of the land of Joseph Parsons and bounded on the North by the South side of said allotment sold to Thomas Tressider being a line bearing Westerly, three chains and twenty two links to a creek seperating the said allotment hereby assured from other part of the said vendors land, on the West by that creek being a line bearing Southerly fifty nine feet to the North West Corner of Lot 19 of the said sub division on the South by said Lot 19 being a line bearing Easterly two chains and seventy eight links to the Main Road. And on the East by the said Main Road being a line bearing Northerly by seventy three feet to the commencing point, be the said several dimensions a little more or less".

In 1885 a contract was let to a builder named J.McIntosh for the erection of a hall on this site for the sum of £474/-, using bricks and stone supplied under supervision of H.S. Fry. The bricks for the construction of the Oddfellows Hall and for other buildings in Woonona and Bulli were made "on an elevation at the rear of the court house, south of and overlooking the proposed railway station at Bulli". Bulli's first brick works were abandoned with the building of the railway line which passed across their site and where the goods yard was constructed. The production of bricks then began at Woonona where Pendlebury's works were opened.

An account of the hall at that time stated that it occupied, "a central position in the scattered localities that go to make the township of Bulli, being not far from the site of the railway station" and was actually on the northern side of the main road, just south of Organs Road and subsequently became the Masonic Temple.

The foundation stone was laid by William Wiley for the Grand United Order of Foresters and a document was placed in a bottle under the foundation stone. I wonder if it is still there?.

F. Farrell