

PHOTOGRAPHS OF "GARDEN HILL HOUSE"

In response to the article entitled 'Rare Images of Garden Hill' and the sketch of a house of that name published in the August 1996 Bulletin, Mrs Elizabeth M. Osborne, the widow of Frederick Meares Osborne (great grandson of Dr John Osborne) wrote to inform me that "Garden Hill" House was originally "the house of Dr John Osborne. The house later became part of Wollongong District Hospital but was later demolished. There is a photograph in the Wollongong City Library c. 1925."

I was delighted to receive this news because it immediately made me remember a

rare photo of Wollongong Hospital my wife and I published in our book *Greetings from Wollongong*. I had assumed that the building in the photo was an old wing of the Wollongong Hospital buildings constructed in 1907. On reflection, however, it seems pretty certain that this was no twentieth century structure and the building was clearly an early colonial dwelling. On checking Mrs Osborne's information at Wollongong Library recently, I found that she was definitely correct and that photos labelled "Garden Hill House" did survive and that the building was exactly the same structure found in our rare photo and in others of the Wollongong Hospital held by Wollongong Library. Although I am a little dubious about the date "c.1925" written on the back of one of the photos I am glad to publish all known surviving photos from both my own and the library's collection in the current Bulletin.

But from there the plot thickens.

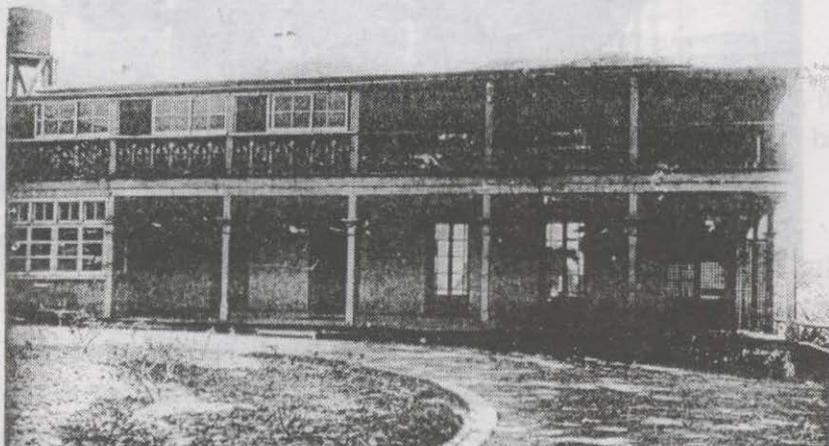
Mrs Osborne writes that she obtained the following information "from the Genealogical History of Pioneer Families of Australia and from correspondence between Dr John Osborne and the Colonial Secretary which [her] husband obtained from England":

"John Osborne surgeon R.N. having made several visits to Australia as a surgeon superintendent in convict ships, in 1831 applied for the transfer to him of a grant of 640 acres made to Joseph Thompson (not "John" as recorded on the map quoted in the August Bulletin) in 1824 named Glen Gosh in the Illawarra District". Dr Osborne increased the purchase in 1836 by 300 acres and renamed it "Garden Hill".

Mrs Osborne then writes that "Dr John Osborne was appointed surgeon at Illawarra in 1834. He died at Garden Hill in 1850 and his wife at Garden Hill in 1858."

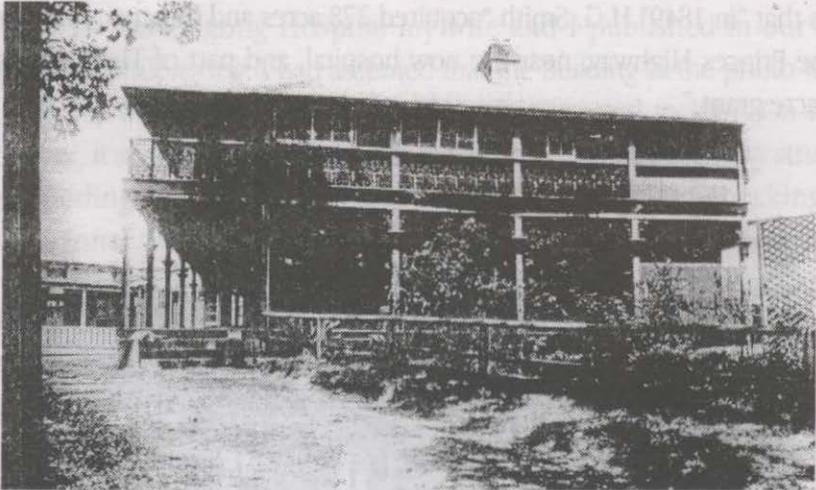
Information from Mr D.K. Muir published in the August 1996 Bulletin (p.70) indi-

cates that "in 1849" H.G. Smith "acquired 278 acres and 69 acres, north and south of the Princes Highway, near the now hospital, and part of Thompson's original 640 acre grant."



The accompanying undated original sketch of "Garden Hill House" published with the August 1996 Bulletin article declares the house to be "The property of H.G. Smith Esqr". This inscription is contained on the original map and is not my attribution. When one compares the sketch with the surviving photos published in this Bulletin, it becomes apparent that both buildings featured lattice work as part of their design. Even though this is about the only notable common feature, is it possible that the images are of the same building?

But as Mrs Osborne indicates that Dr John Osborne did not die until 1850 and his wife not until 1858 the big question which needs to be asked is whether the house in the sketch on the map and the surviving photos is the house on Garden Hill where Dr Osborne and his wife died or another building constructed by H.G. Smith?



The house depicted in the undated sketch appears very different to the images purporting to be of "Garden Hill House" found in Wollongong City Library. In the photos the upper storey room appear to have access to the verandah balcony but in the sketch the house does not appear to have access to the verandah roof. I should also point out that the sketch is very close to the original quality found on the map. Unfortunately, part of the map appears to have been covered with tape and the marks caused by this cut right through the sketch of the lattice work of the house.

The original land grant in the vicinity of what is today regarded as "Garden Hill" was issued to Joseph Thompson in 1824 even though Thompson did not arrive in the colony until a year later - something which was not impossible for someone with good connections. The grant was then sold in 1828 to John Tawell whose extraordinary history is admirably chronicled in the October 1979 issue of our Bulletin.

If by 1836 Dr Osborne had some 940 acres on Garden Hill and H.G. Smith only acquires 347 acres north and south of the Highway in 1849 (a year before the

death of Dr Osborne and 9 years before the death of his wife who is said to have died at Garden Hill), then there is a possibility that the Osbornes were living in a different house to the one depicted in both the sketch and the photos which show that it survived into this century to become part of Wollongong Hospital. The exact date of demolition of the building utilized by the hospital has not yet been established.

Do any descendants of the Osborne Family have a sketch, watercolour, painting or photograph of Dr John Osborne's residence so that a comparison can be made between it and the surviving photographs of Wollongong Hospital?

In some of the old photos of the hospital, there is another (possibly early colonial) residence in view. Could this single storey house have been the residence of the Osborne family and not the double-storey structure which both the undated map and the written material scrawled on the surviving photos indicates was the Wollongong Hospital Building formerly known as 'Garden Hill House'? If it wasn't the Osborne house, what was its function and when was it built?

Does anyone know for certain? I would be delighted to publish reader's contributions to unravelling the mysteries about either the sketch or the buildings in the photos.

Joseph Davis