

REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING

Osbornes in Early Illawarra

We are indebted to Frank for the insights into our early days that his address revealed. There was a Royal naval Surgeon, Dr Alick Osborne, born in 1793 in County Tyrone, Ireland, who made frequent voyages to the colony as a surgeon on Convict ships. Why Illawarra appealed to the Doctor remains unknown but his two brothers became prominent free settlers in the district - settling at Dapto (Dr Alick Osborne), Marshall Mount (Henry Osborne) and Mangerton and Garden Hill (Dr John Osborne also a superintendent surgeon on convict ships).

Frank did not concentrate on these men but focussed his attention on his own ancestor, Robert Osborne, his great grandfather, who responded to Dr Alick's call on behalf of Governor Bourke to encourage mechanics (skilled workers) to leave their native land and settle in the col.colony. Robert arrived here in 1837, as a married man in his late twenties. He came with his brother, James Osborne (then about 20 and also married).

By no means were they the only Osbornes to arrive in the late 1830s. The ships on which Osbornes served as superintendent surgeons brought a number of other relatives bearing that name.

Robert and his cousin James were, for a brief period, business partners in building. It was the late 1830s and early 1840s. It has already been covered in our talks that the town of Wollongong was gazetted. Government land sales (Crown Street and to the south) were occurring and Charles Throsby Smith was involved in land subdivision of his own. Business activity was on the increase, as were public works - roads and harbour construction. The Osborne's got caught up in it. The boom was followed by a bust. So it was that the Osbornes struck financial trouble. Whether it was caused by the untimely death of cousin James is not known.

There are joys and tragedies in the lives of the Osbornes.

Robert died in 1859, aged 51. He had chosen to be multi-skilled by the time of his deaths, with interests in "building", "undertaking" and "hotel keeping" and land ownership.

He owned the Commercial Hotel in Crown Street and the Freemasons Hotel in Market Square which remained in the family after his death.

The text of Frank's address is available and we are open to suggestions as to its publication in some form, together with others made during the year.

A special thanks to Frank Osborne for the effort he put into this address.

Peter Daly