type with more than 100 names on some pages. The sheer quantity of material on these pages reflects an enormous effort on somebody's part, but the type is so small and sometimes tucked into the margin that it is difficult to read and some pages would be impossible to photocopy. But the book is well worth buying, so why resort to photocopying?
A part from minor glitches, which after all are almost non-existent when compared to our own Bulletin, this book is a very worthwhile account of Wollongong's foremost pioneer.

Frank Osborne

Also by the same author:
South Flowing Water is Thicker than Blood, C T Smith's brief career as an explorer.
From the same address and at the same price, $10 including postage.

HIDDEN TREASURE

Wollongong's First Customs House

Recently, on my way to photograph some threatened buildings on Cliff Road (numbers 54 to 64) I decided to deviate into the grounds of the old court house (opened 1858) to see if the even older customs house was still there behind all the paraphernalia that clutters the grounds these days.

There it was indeed, with its hardwood weather boards partly covered with peeling paint but its every physical detail identical with the lonely building perched on the edge of Brighton Beach as shown in an etching labelled Wollongong Harbourside in the 1880s which has appeared in a number of publications. It may be found on page 39 of the Society's publication Port of Wollongong, second edition, 1975; in Plate 44 in the Wyewurry Greetings from Wollongong, 1995; and on page 46 of the IHS Bulletin, August-September 1997. This Bulletin also contained a sketch from a survey dated 1885 which showed the original location of the customs house quite close to the present kiosk.

In this picture we see a small wooden, hip-roofed building with an eastern verandah onto which opens a front door. At the western end is a chimney and along the side facing the beach is another window in the centre of the wall. The building behind the old court house has all these features except the verandah, but if one looks closely there are still two notches in the weatherboards where the narrow verandah was attached, just above door level. One of these notches is now partially obscured by a downpipe but still
visible.

Moved to its present position behind the court house when the latter became the customs house some time after the court deserted it in 1885, could this be the oldest building in Wollongong?

Despite a few missing weatherboards beside the chimney, the condition of the structure is surprisingly sound. But just how old is it? Can anyone help with hard evidence on this?

WOLLONGONG’S FIRST COURT HOUSE

Whilst wandering around the 1858 court house, I toyed again with a question that has been bothering me for years: where was the first court house in Wollongong? There are plenty of references to indicate it was a brick building erected in 1834 in Harbour Street, even Lady Franklin observed that, and Gardiner-Garden confirms it, but just where was it to be found in Harbour Street?

Page 26 of Gardiner-Garden’s Port of Wollongong seems to have the answer: One C. S. is reported in the Illawarra Mercury of 8th December, 1856 as saying “the courthouse is still in the same rascally broken down condition.” Gardiner-Garden then goes on to say:

At that time plans were in course of preparation for a new structure, and it was decided that it should be immediately contiguous to the existing building.

As the 1858 court house was immediately contiguous to the existing building and the existing building fronted Harbour Street, the first court house must have been where the carpark for the “old” court house is now. That explains why the stone building was placed so far to one side of the site.

Incidentally, Gardiner-Garden continues with details of tendering and construction of both the court house and the gaol. In November 1859 the Illawarra Mercury reported on the gaol:

This structure is all but ready for tenanting, but we are happy to say no tenants are awaiting its completion.

FWO April ‘98