

1. HISTORY OF 'CAWARRA COTTAGE'



Cawarra Cottage, formerly known also as The Willows, is estimated to have been built in 1866. This is the same year that the ill-fated "*Cawarra Steamship*" also lost up to 60 lives off the coastline at Stockton Beach, Newcastle on July 12, 1866. Deemed to be one of the worst maritime disasters of that era.

The name *Cawarra* has some fascinating associations; an Aboriginal word meaning, 'beside running water' and it was used by Dr Henry Lindemann, the famous viticulturist, to name his original homestead in the Hunter Valley. "*Cawarra*" wine produced by Lindemann is still a popular label today.

The exact date of construction or the builder of Cawarra Cottage has never been ascertained.

Thomas Spicer was the original purchaser of this block facing north in Short Street in about 1831. The Mudgee Township was founded in 1838 and Thomas Spicer is listed as the owner of the race horse called "*Old Bachelor*" that raced at the first Mudgee race meeting held at Putta Bucca in 1842. Thomas Spicer is listed also in the 1828 Census of New South Wales as aged 27 years, transported per "*Morley 2*" in 1818 for 14 years and who was an overseer for Robert Lowe at *Sidmouth Valley*, near Bathurst.

His association with the Lowe family no doubt brought him to the Mudgee district, where Robert Lowe's sons established several notable properties such as *Goree*, *Wilbertree* and *Eurunderee*. Today the Lowe family has notable wines at 'Tinja' being preservative free and bio-dynamic.

13 September 1864 – Dickson and Burrows, Merchants Mudgee bought the allotment on which *Cawarra Cottage* would later be built.

1885-1887 – Mr Thomas Howard Marks, purchased the house.

15 May 1890 – possibly became Broughton Private Hospital of which the infamous Jimmy Governor had associations. It is reputed that the police constable injured by Jimmy Governor stayed at Broughton Hospital to recuperate from his injuries.

The precise ownership of the house is obscure during the early 1890s.

At some stage in the 1890s the property was acquired by the Reverend Edmund Percival Lowe.

The property was then sold to John Peter Horn, hotelkeeper of 'Green Hills' near Cassilis, for £640. He died in Cassilis in 1906.

Ownership of *Cawarra Cottage* then passed to his wife, Sarah Jane.

Sarah Jane Horn sold *Cawarra Cottage* to Emilie Mary Besnard for £600.

9 January 1936 – “Cawarra” was sold by Emilie to Walter Thomas, a dentist, of Mudgee for £750. He died in 1948 leaving the house to his wife, Evelyn, for her lifetime.

For many years the house was tenanted and divided into two flats. Evelyn Thomas died in 1969 and consequently the estate of Walter Thomas offered the house at auction in July 1970. Their daughter, Jan Moore, is still alive and lives in Mudgee.

July 1970 - It was purchased by Ken and Esme Bray of Mudgee for \$14,800 and renamed *The Willows*. The house was extensively renovated by the Bray's for their daughter.

Ken Bray died in 1989 and Esme died in June 2004. Their daughter, Jane was confined to a wheelchair with Multiple Sclerosis and much of the gardening was done by Jane.

11 February 2006, *Cawarra Cottage* was purchased by Jason Gaff and Kirsty Stokes, who restored it to its original name *Cawarra Cottage*. Again further renovations were done to modernise the bathrooms and kitchen.

27 February 2014 it was sold to John & Karen Guest with the purpose of establishing serviced accommodation at *Cawarra Cottage*.

***Appreciation and thanks goes to John Broadley, Mudgee's local historian, for collating much of the material aforementioned.*