**A Meeting with Eric Skarratt**

On Saturday 4th May 1996 we met with Eric Skarratt at his home in Wascoe Street Glenbrook.

Eric was able to tell us some of the story of Ulinbawn through his families association with the house.

Eric's father purchased Ulinbawn about the turn of the century and the Skarratt family lived there until they later moved across the street to Mountside which they purchased from Colin Smith. Eric was born in 1919 whilst they were living at Mountside.

Ulinbawn remained in the Skarratt family until the 1960s and was tenanted until the time it was sold.

Eric could remember as a child playing with the children from the "Academy", this was during the period when Ulinbawn was used as a boarding school. There were about 20 students. The headmaster apparently lived at the house with the children who slept on the verandah, protected from the elements by lath roll blinds. (Eric and his brother slept similarly on their upstairs verandah at Mountside all year round).

There were in these days four houses in the area. These were Ulinbawn, Mountside, Briarcliffe and Logie. Mountside was built about the turn of the century (it looks older than this?). Eric had a photo of Mountside with his father sitting on the front steps. (His father had wanted a house where he could sit at the front with his pyjamas on without being seen, seemingly this had motivated him to purchase so much land). The photo of Mountside showed the upstairs verandah at which was subsequently burned during a bushfire and never rebuilt. There was a small stone cottage at the back of Mountside which Eric had a photo of, it has since disappeared. Also, he told us, there had been a small cottage near the RAAF entrance.

Ulinbawn had extensive gardens with the grounds covering the area up to the RAAF entrance. Eric said there were about 6 acres. The Illawarra Flame tree at the front of the house was always there as far back as he could remember. Other trees he remembered were a Himalayan Strawberry Tree located behind the house in Nepean Gardens Place or further (the birds enjoyed the strawberries more than he did), a guava and a red camellia. The camellia was notable as, whilst Mountside had a white camellia, red was quite unusual.

The verandah had cast iron lace at the top but no railings. The bathroom was located on the southern side of the house (i.e., where the present storeroom is located). The kitchen was the rear room, now the family room. There was a buttery where the en-suite is now located. The dining room was at the back of the house, now the second bedroom, and a pantry was nearby (part of the present kitchen area?). The present dining room was previously a bedroom.

There was a well "like half an apple" at the rear of the house. A garage existed about in the turning circle of Nepean Gardens Place.

The Skarratts owned extensive property through the Glenbrook area including about 52 acres between the lagoon and Old Bathurst Road as well as along Mount Street. Their money went on buying these properties and subsequently on paying the rates without ever realising much return. His father never wanted to sell the properties Eric mentioned that he had a photo of his family in their 1923? Daimler dressed up ready to go to the picnic races at their property near the lagoon. This car was only the second in Glenbrook, the first having been a Stanley steam car.

During the war Eric had served overseas including Bougainville. The fire which damaged Mountside had been during this time. In 1944 there were bad bushfires in the area and Ulinbawn had a narrow escape with some of the verandah having been damaged. Someone was able to put out the fire (there was no town water in the area). Ulinbawn was used by the RAAF during the war to billet staff. It was not in good condition as the Skarratts had no money for it.

Eric had subdivided the lower half of the property after the war, the subdivision of the upper half was undertaken by the surveyor Peter Freeburn of Penrith.

Ulinbawn continued to deteriorate until the family sold it.

Eric said he may have a picture of Ulinbawn and would show it to us when/if he could find it.

When Eric returned from the war he had wanted to build a brick house in front of Ulinbawn. When he told his father the price his father regarded it as extravagant and told him he would not be able to afford it. Eric instead occupied the site where he now lives, the first shop in Glenbrook had been there, a timber shop with bullnose verandah. Eric had the shop relocated back about 60 feet where he lived until he could afford to build his present home.

Eric recalled his father's claim to fame which was in 1906. During a heavy storm which washed away part of the railway line near the tunnel, he managed to stop the oncoming train (with his wife's red underpants, or so the story goes). He showed us a letter of commendation his father had received from a Mr Goodwin of the railways in which he said that if it had been wartime he would have received a Victoria Cross for his efforts. Another letter referred to the gift of a watch (or two) which was given to him. Eric's father was living at Ulinbawn at this time. Eric also mentioned a painting that was made of the washaway.

Eric is an architect by profession, as also is his son, John, who now earns his living as a photographer. Eric's wife is an artist.

[See also the article "As Told to Me" dictated by Donald Skarratt in 1977]