WEEKEND READING

At the Archives

BY WAYNE DOUBLEDAY

Foxborough Hall stands test of time

FOXBOROUGH Hall (located in Hardy Avenue) has been well-known in Wagga as a distinguished residence for almost as long as the township itself has existed, and has been called "home" by a number of prominent Wagga identities and families.

The original Foxborough Hall Estate comprised 40 acres (16 hectares) and was first purchased by Thomas Fox, a publican, on October 30, 1856 for the sum of £40.

Interestingly, Portion 78 as it was known at the time had not attracted one bid when it had been offered up at auction just six months earlier in.

Fox built the original Foxborough Hall residence in 1857 – a brick building with two wings, on the hill with a commanding view over the growing township of Wagga.

Fox named the property "Foxborough" after his wife's parents' the home in Ireland.

After Fox's death in 1859, the estate was sold to another publican, Thomas Byrnes, who then sold it to Thomas Darlow in March 1863 for £1300. Darlow was the co-founder of the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* with Auber Jones.

James Gormly, a well-known Wagga political identity, bought Foxborough Hall and the estate on July 8, 1882. During the mid-1880s, Gormly (who was at the time mayor of Wagga) often offered up portions of the Foxborough Estate for ploughing competitions.

Sadly, the original Foxborough Hall residence was destroyed by fire on February 10, 1887. The cause of the disastrous fire was said to be a burst kerosene lamp. Thankfully none of the Gormly family were hurt in the fire, but nothing of the original residence could be saved and only a detached brick building used as a kitchen survived the blaze.

The *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* reported: "... the building destroyed may be fitly termed one of the old landmarks of Wagga."

Gormly decided to rebuild Foxborough Hall on the same spot in 1893 (pictured right).

Amazingly, another fire on July 13, 1893 resulted in the stables being burnt down, but the new homestead was not damaged.

With the entire Foxborough Estate now some 80 acres, Gormly sold the western side of the estate (totalling 40 acres) to Charles Hardy and his son, Henry, in 1913.

By 1917, ownership of Foxborough had passed to R J E Gormly (James's son) and a large part of the remaining estate was subdivided in 1922 into 178 building allotments bordered by Coleman Street and Cullen Road.

In 1926, R J E Gormly sold the Foxborough Hall residence and an adjoining 20 acres of land to the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary.

Costing £8000 pounds, the residence and site was used as a temporary private hospital (while Lewisham Hospital was constructed) able to accommodate between 12 and 14 patients.

On the afternoon of November 17, 1926, the temporary hospital at Foxborough was officially opened by Bishop Dwyer.
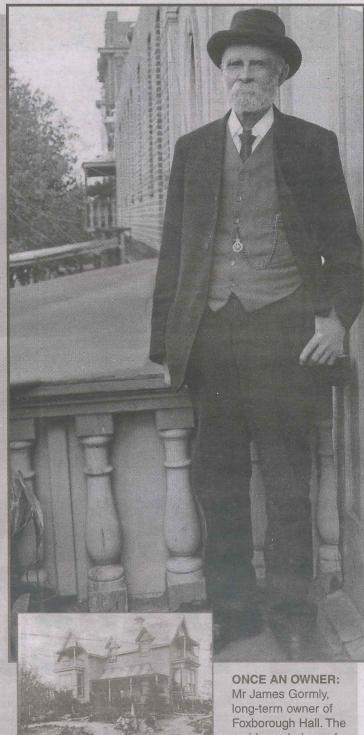
More recently, complete renovations of the homestead were undertaken by Graham and Betty Hornibrook beginning in 1989.

Prior to this, Foxborough had been operating as a residence comprising of 13 small flats. The Hornibrook's lived in the house for several years until selling the property in 1992.

Foxborough Hall is currently owned by Dr Paul Latimer who has transformed the residence into medical consulting rooms.

Special thanks to Graham and Betty Hornibrook for their assistance in providing historical information about Foxborough Hall.

■ References: *Daily Advertiser* (03/07/1884, 10/02/1887, 20/07/1893, 17/11/01926, 08/04/1995, 03/06/1995); *Gormly Index* compiled by RJE Gormly available at CSU Regional Archives; "*On Foxborough Hill – Calvary Hospital, Wagga Wagga – Its Beginning & Development*" by Sylvia Walsh in Journal of the WW&DHS, No. 7, 1986.

ONCE AN OWNER: Mr James Gormly, long-term owner of Foxborough Hall. The residence belonged to the Gormly Family from 1882-1926. (CSU Regional Archives - RW98/22).

LONG HISTORY: The rebuilt Foxborough Hall from the Eastern side of the residence (DA, 03/06/1995).