

ON THE STREETS WHERE YOU LIVE



Ulonga Avenue and Donald Esplin

Ulonga Avenue, Greenwich has a unique history in the origins of its naming. It was named for *Ulonga Station*, the boyhood home of prominent architect, David Thomas Esplin. The property of 300,000 acres in the Hay district of New South Wales was recognized as one of the best improved runs in the later part of the 19th Century.

In May 1902, three acres of undeveloped land in Greenwich, advertised as the 'Ancram Heights Estate' was purchased by Donald Thomas Esplin. It was comprised of 4 lots fronting Gordon Road (now the Pacific Highway) and a 5th Lot, with a frontage to Innes Road. By 1903, Esplin had designed and built two houses on Lot 5, the largest lot. He named the homes *Kitea Roa* and *Wongabella* (later renamed *Mandalay*).

Donald Thomas Esplin was born in Hay, New South Wales in 1874, the third child of George and Jane Esplin. George Esplin had entered the hotel trade in 1869, and by 1871 had taken over the licence of Hay's smallest hotel, *Tattersall's*, which he extended and upgraded. Soon the *Town & Country Journal* described *Tattersall's Family Hotel* as the leading hotel in town.

George Esplin, aged 40, died two months after the birth of his fourth child in 1878. His wife, Jane remarried nine years later in 1887 to Thomas Frederick Patterson, a grazier of *Ulonga Station*. After the marriage Jane and her four children made their home at Tom's *Ulonga* property. It was considered one of the best runs in the Hay district, employing a staff of seventy, shearing 100,000 sheep in a shearing shed with 85 stands, and also running a large number of cattle and horses. Although not named specifically, Tom Patterson's property is commemorated in the traditional Australian poem and folk song, 'Flash Jack from Gundagai'.

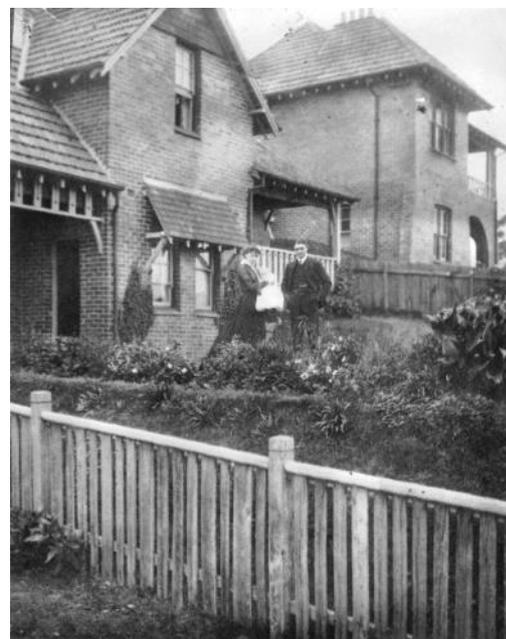
Donald Esplin completed his schooling in Melbourne and at the age of sixteen worked in the Melbourne office of architect, Robert Lawson. In 1895 Donald became apprenticed to the Sydney architectural firm of John Sulman and Joseph Power and attended lectures at Sydney Technical College and Sydney University. In 1901 Donald Esplin was admitted as a member of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales.

Donald married Emily (Daisy) Reid in Melbourne in 1902, the same year he bought the Ancram Heights Estate. Esplin resold Lots 1-4 of the estate shortly after his purchase. He also dedicated to Lane Cove Council a 40-foot (12m) wide roadway to provide access to the allotments into which the Ancram Heights Estate was subdivided. The road was to be called Ulonga

Avenue in commemoration of his childhood home in Hay. He also sold the house *Wongabella* (now 4 Ulonga Avenue) after its completion. He made *Kitea Roa* (2 Ulonga Avenue) his family home until 1907.

Donald Esplin became a distinguished architect who practiced for over forty years and designed more than 500 projects. He designed fifteen major buildings in the City of Sydney, including the *Astor* in Macquarie Street, *The Carlton Hotel*, and *Her Majesty's Arcade*. The *Astor* is the only remaining city building. Esplin also designed more than three hundred houses, warehouses, factories, shops, memorials, grandstands, and even a garden suburb. He was the architect for fifty houses on the North Shore. Daisy Esplin died on 2 September 1960 and Donald shortly after on 23 September 1960.

Ulonga Avenue first appeared in Lane Cove rate books from 1915 and the Sands Directories from 1918.



Donald, Daisy and baby Tom Esplin outside Kitea Roa, 2 Ulonga Avenue, Greenwich in 1903.
(Courtesy of Lane Cove Library/A. Austin/Esplin Family)

