Obviously more research could be done on this family. Searching for the death certificate of William Wilson would be time consuming as there are many William Wilsons. The sudden cessation of references to William Wilson after 1842 may be a clue to his death date. I hope that some reader of this article will be able to contribute more information.

1. Reminiscences of Illawarra Pt. 22
2. Reminiscences of Illawarra Pt. 3
3. Illawarra Mercury 13/2/1897
4. Australian 7/9/1838
6. Australian 20/5/1831

ANOTHER WILLIAM WILSON OF ILLAWARRA

We should also remember William Wilson (1777-1852) whose death notice appears in the Sydney Herald of 5 October 1852:

DIED 22 Sept. 1852 aged 75 years WILLIAM WILSON at JOHNSTON’S MEADOWS, Illawarra. One of the first who took stock with his master to the district in 1817. An old & faithful servant, having lived in the service of Mr. D. JOHNSTON For 37 years.

Peter Doyle

REMINISCENCES OF JACK DEVITT

(continued from October Bulletin)

The Stockyards was a horror. The road was non-existing. Most of the people were Depression settlers and many had no title. The Council didn’t recognise them. They eventually gave them power but they waited years for water and bugger the road.

We would put the Chev into dead low and walk her down the ruts and gullies with a couple of tons of ice on the back.

Many times we were tempted to refuse to go into the place but they were nice decent folk and they wanted ice as much as anyone else.

One day whilst negotiating the track we hit an unknown rut and whoosh - half the bloody load shot over the cab like an avalanche, landing in the dirt ahead of us. We just sat there like a pair of stunned mullets.

“Well bugger it, Jack,” said Pete, “they will have to take it dirt and all today.”

So we set to, threw what was salvageable back on the truck and went our merry way. The broken ice was soon scoffed up by the local kids who appeared in droves.

Not long after, the men of Stockyard made a reasonable track by volunteer labour using picks and shovels. Maybe they thought Devitts were about to jack up on them at last.

We blew numerous tyres on that stretch which took the cream off the day’s run.
At Christmas time the campers on Coledale Beach were a bonus. After finishing the run we would go through the camp, find out how much ice was required, then slip back to the Works often for another ¼ ton.

On one of these occasions as we pulled into the Works the boss was filling up the moulds for next day with a fire hose. I thought this was an opportunity to broach the subject of filtering the water.

Keeping on filling the moulds he remarked, "They drink the bloody water, don’t they?"

I had to agree, "Well, if its good enough to drink, its good enough to make ice.”

He had me clean bowled so we kept on flogging slimy ice, much to Mrs. T’s disgust.

Refrigerators started to appear with the result that ice chests soon became antiques and ice runs became almost worthless.

Tom Ford had a Butter and Honey run about the town. He was a short roly-poly man always decked out in a clean white apron. His cart was like the Fisho’s with the butter and honey jars stacked neatly inside. He seemed to make a living although he had a fair bit of opposition from the numerous grocery shops. He had a couple of big lumps of lads, Tom and Ern. The latter ended up Mayor of Wollongong. Both were good footrunners in their prime. In later years they coached young athletes in the art.

Another regular caller was the Clothes Prop man who drove about in a spring cart selling forked saplings about 8’ - 10’ long. There were no Hills Hoists. The clothes line consisted of either a rope or wire stretched between two posts. The props were used to take up the sag when the wet clothes were hung out.

Naturally there had to be some slack so that the line could be reached. As the line filled up the prop was adjusted to keep the clothes out of the dirt and when full the prop was pushed up further to let the wash flap in the breeze. Being only bush timber they soon became brittle and snapped so there was need for replacement every now and then.

The wash was done in a fuel copper and set of concrete tubs. The scrubbing was done on a wooden wash board that had a corrugated face. If you were flash you may have a hand wringer, whilst the applicant had a big mangle to smooth out the sheets and towels after they came off the line. When there was a baby in the house the nappies were boiled in the copper with chips of Sunlight Soap pared off the cake with a knife. As there was no sewerage, wash day sometimes presented a problem with all the water being used but as most people had a vegetable garden it would be channelled around to irrigate the beds.

The Dunny Man

The Dunny was generally well down the back yard because of the stink; being generally camouflaged as best as possible with a bit of lattice hiding the door and honeysuckle grown over as much of the edifice as possible. The sweet smelling honeysuckle vine did two jobs.

Originally there was just a bench, squat high with a hole and hinged lid with the pan underneath. A later refinement was a box arrangement that fitted over the pan.

There was often a tin of lime to sprinkle over the contents and a bottle of
phenol. Toilet paper was unknown. The newspaper was cut into about 9" squares and hung on a nail within reach of those on the thunder box.

Once a week the Dunnyman did his rounds first in a cart, later a truck. He generally wore just a pair of pants, a blue singlet and an old felt hat with a folded sugar bag for his shoulder.

He would come in on the run, carrying an empty can. Dump it on the Dunny floor, pull out the full pan, clamp on the lid, heave the stinking mess on to his shoulder and trot off to the cart. First in generally had to place the new pan in place. What a bloody job! But they were the healthiest blokes in the town, strong as bulls and really did a mighty job for the community. It was the done thing to leave a couple of bottles of beer out for him at Christmas.

In some places they had a trap door at the back so that the pan could be removed and replaced without his having to go into the Dunny at all. This sometimes caused a bit of embarrassment when the change over took place with some one on the throne.

There was a Sanitary Depot on the dunes behind the Cemetery where the pans were emptied into trenches in the sand and covered over. They had a steam plant to clean the pans which were then tar dipped to be ready for use again.

This service was run by the Bulli Shire Council who later superseded the horses and carts with Vulcan trucks with specially built steel bodies and solid rubber tyres. Before the advent of sewerage, septic tanks were installed where they could be afforded, being a great improvement on the old pan system.

There were some real characters among the Dunnymen. Sometimes they would sneak into the pub for a thirst quencher whilst on the run, only to be told to get to buggery down to the other end of the bar by the local drinkers.

One character, Poohey -, always had an answer to these jibes with "Well, so and so, there's some of yours out there in the truck".

This generally had the desired effect of taking the mickey out of them to let Poohey finish his drink, wipe his moosh with the back of his hand and set sail for a few more collections.

Grocers

Mr. Bird had a large grocery store in Woonona opposite Strachan Park. The building still stands with the loading dock at the rear.

He was a very tall distinguished gentleman, always immaculately turned out in his white apron collar and tie.

In front of the counter he had on display boxes of dried apricots, apples and prunes which the kids would nick as they waited to be served. I am sure he knew what was going on but never seemed to mind.

He had numerous customers, delivering orders by horse and cart.

He later opened a small branch in front of his residence in Chenall Street, Woonona. You could buy quite a feed of broken biscuits for 1 penny.

The Princess Theatre

Where Strachan Park now stands was the location of the Princess picture theatre run by Sam and Levi Glass and behind the theatre was a hall called the Canary Cottage used for various functions.

The Princess was set back from the road somewhat with a forecourt paved with
Pendlebury's brickpavers.

Along the southern side of this forecourt was a long narrow shop run by the Weigold family who opened up to supply the picture theatre crowds with sweets, chocolates, ice creams in little rectangular boxes plus a tiny wooden spoon. They also sold fountain drinks - aerated soft drinks dispensed from a battery of hand pumps. You could have an added scoop of ice cream if so desired. As the pictures, especially Sat. Aft and Night, were the really only form of entertainment, this shop was a goldmine.

The front of the theatre was two storey with the projection room at the top. The whole of the front facade was done in blue ceramic tiles - quite a show.

The rest of the structure was of wood construction clad externally with galvanised iron whilst the interior was tastefully lined with plaster board. There was a bottom section - peanut alley plus a dress circle.

An orchestra pit was situated in front of the screen where a pianist and violinist supplied appropriate music for the film being shown.

Sam Glass, resplendent in his tuxedo and bow tie, was master of ceremonies, welcoming the patrons and seeing to the smooth running of the whole business.

Later on, in about 1928, Greater Union built a chain of new theatres from Thirroul to Pt. Kembla. The Royal, now the Vista, was built at Woonona more or less sounding the death knell of the Princess which closed down soon after. Naturally Weigolds losing much trade also, soon sold out.

The shop was updated and used for several purposes. As a cheap grocery run by a Jewish clan, Eisenbergs, during Depression and finally a Fish and Chip shop - Cafe as it still trades.

Next door was a Boot repairer's Shop and next door Mr. Harding had his Tailor's shop which had a piece of Ringed flooring just as you entered the building. This was rigged up to a bell which rang as a customer entered, alerting Mr. Harding at work at his big Singer tailor's machine in a room out back. The shop had shelves of suitings and little sample books of material which he would give to prospective customers.

**Bernard - The German**

Very few knew his name but everyone knew Bernard the German, who was an odd job man around the town. In fact there were few jobs that could stump him.

He lived in a hut he had built on the banks of the creek that runs down through the valley between Bulli and Woonona Heights.

It was a beautiful spot in the midst of the rain forest. He was completely self sufficient.

His place was built half stone, half wood with a galvanised iron roof and stone chimney.

He had dammed the creek with a small weir from which he ran a pipe to his house. A small rainwater tank supplied his personal needs whilst the creek water irrigated his considerable vegetable garden.

Several fruit trees, especially quinces, supplied him with fruit. He also kept a few hives of bees and a couple of goats which supplied his milk.

He had a good sized workshop where he did carpentry and a bit of tinsmithing plus anything that came up.
Around town he would be employed, fencing, concreting, bricklaying and carpentry, mainly in small jobs.

His hobby was collecting snakes. I don’t know if he removed their fangs but was never known to have been bitten. Often he would have a couple in the sugar bag he generally had slung over his shoulder when he went to get his few basic groceries in town.

On one occasion calling into the Woonona pub for a beer he became the butt of some banter from a few of the young louts in the bar. Being a Kraut, he didn’t have much of a sense of humour. Without a word he upended his sugar bag and out fell a couple of wrigglers on to the bar room floor.

Grown men were reported screaming like banshees as they knocked one another down in the scramble to clear the bar.

Only Bernard was left. He finished his beer, put his pets back into the sugar bag and sauntered out on his way back to his hut in the bush, whilst the mob gaped in awe at that old retreating German.

It is reported his never being troubled again when he went for a beer at Woonona Pub.

If my memory serves me correctly they found him dead in that beautiful spot he had in the bush.

The Railway Buses

Several buses met all passenger trains from Sydney. The drivers would tout for customers as they came out of the Waiting Room at Bulli Station which hasn’t changed much since it was first built.

Pearces had a Reo, about 1923 model. They bought out a chap called Nott who built a garage on the hill almost opposite Woonona Pub. The same building still stands being used as a Swimming Pool Shop.

Pearce also held the Mail contract which entailed picking up the mail bags from the Woonona and Bulli Post Offices taking them to the Railway where they were put on the train for the G.P.O. Sydney. They used the same bus for this operation.

Bluey Makin had a T Ford with a high aluminium body, just like an Arnott’s biscuit tin on wheels.

Ivo Bunker had a Chandler tourer chassis extended on to which he built a body.

As you entered the bus you would be asked where you desired to go. The driver would then go to the farthest destination, dropping any off on the way if necessary, then gradually get rid of the lot, taking them to the door, just like a taxi all for about 4 pence or 6 pence.

Bulli was very popular at holiday times. There were several good guest houses besides Bulli Family Hotel which had first class accommodation. The buses would be full, doing a roaring trade. There were no taxis.

Ivo Bunker had two hire cars, a Chandler and Cleveland which could be hired for trips etc. A trip up the Pass was very popular with the tourists. The road was steep, rutted and blue metal paved but Ivo’s cars had no trouble making the climb.

He would stop at the Wishing Well for the passengers to get out, take a sip of
water from the well to make a wish.

Brooky Ball who had a garage at Woonona was a Packard man and also hired them out, although Brook was a bit of a speedster who put the fear of God into many, especially the women.

Later, in the thirties he had a couple of 7 passenger Packards. He would jamb a soccer team into a car, taking them as far afield as the Newcastle area, Kurri Kurri, Weston etc.

Days ran a daily Sydney to Nowra return trip in Hudson Super Six Charabanc's, about six seaters with a windshield in front of each seat. The hood was generally folded down at the back so that the passengers could feel the wind on their cheeks and hair. If it rained the hood could be run up smartly. These cars could carry about 20-25 people.

They came down the Pass, returning via the Coast road, pulling up at Mrs. Pott’s Tea House on Flanagan’s Creek at Thirroul for Afternoon tea. If the men passengers fancied something stronger they could adjourn to Riley’s Wine Saloon on the opposite corner.

These Days trips were very popular and considering that there was not a sealed road from Tom Uglys they did a remarkable job in the Hudsons.

Martin Christiansen ran a Sydney to Nowra bus for a short time but did not see out Depression.

The Austinmer - Wollongong Buses

In the early twenties Billy Murphy and Russ Woolletthad a T model Ford bus run from W’gong to Austinmer. It ran to no strict timetable often lucky to make the trip.

The old Ford had solid rear tyres with high pressure front pneumatics. The seats ran along the sides and back. There were no windows just open sides which could be covered in rainy weather by dropping the rolled-up curtains. However then the curtains were dropped it was like the inside of a cow with the only light coming in through the windshield and a tiny window in the back.

On the heavy going it was all out whilst the old Rig chugged over the hill, the passengers walking beside. Bulli Hill was notorious for greasy clay. Often the driver requested a bit of a push from behind to help him over.

Bill and Russ generally changed over at dinner time. They lived in a shop opposite Woonona Pub. The bus would pull up with Bill going in to dinner leaving the passengers twiddling their thumbs. Often Russ would be still finishing his dinner, he eventually would saunter out, get aboard, light a cigarette then set sail often regaling his captive audience with Al Jolson’s 'Climb upon my knee, Sonny Boy” or “The Prisoner’s Song”. He didn’t have a bad voice, often in demand for the various concerts held around the town even at the tykes’ “Sacred Concerts” held in the old school hall on a Sunday Night when the nuns were even allowed to be present.

Around about 1925 Dions bought out Billy Murphy. Their parents had a big market garden opposite the present St. John Vianney’s Church on Cabbage Tree Creek.

The old Ford bus was about clapped out so Dions commenced with a little Chev. fitted out with regular bus seats, a big improvement on the lizzie.

(to be continued)