

THE VARIOUS REMINISCENCES OF ILLAWARRA

Illawarra is lucky that over the years the local press have published various so called "reminiscences". The name "Reminiscences" suggests that these are memories of the events recorded. This name truly fits Alexander Stewart's *Reminiscences of Illawarra* (1) first published in the *Illawarra Mercury* in 24 parts between 17 April and 18 August 1894 and republished by the Mercury in the 1930's. He arrived in Australia as a convict in 1828 coming almost immediately to Wollongong where he lived, except for a very brief period, till his death in 1895.

However, the same cannot be said of *Old Pioneer's Reminiscences of Illawarra* published by the same newspaper in the 1920's. "Old Pioneer" was one Frank Young about whom, until recently, we knew very little. However, now thanks

to the following clue given by Mrs. Dorothea Stuart writing in September 1991 I have been able to make some progress.

I am sure that the old Pioneer was Frank Young who lived at Gwynneville or Keiraville and he had a brother who drove him past our street every day in a high sulky and draught horse. I think they were both bachelors. The book says he worked at the South Coast Times but what I remember is that he had an office or room at the old School of Arts, perhaps it was when he was writing the old reminiscences. I am not sure but I certainly remember him driving in each day".

Following this up I checked the 1922 Electoral Roll and found that a Frank Young, agent, and a Matthew Higgins Young, farmer, were both living in Keiraville at that time. Further investigation showed that Frank and Matthew first appeared on the local roll in 1908 when Frank was shown as a miner. By 1913 he was calling himself an agent. Both these descriptions may have been Frank's method of covering up his true occupation - Sergeant of Police(2). Frank, of 28 Williams Street, Keiraville died 30 June 1941 aged 86. He had been born at Queanbeyan circa 1856 to James Young and Margaret McMahon.

One can only assume therefore that Old Pioneer's so called "reminiscences", except for from 1908 on, are not reminiscences at all but merely a collection and recounting of what Frank Young believed to be facts together with material gleaned from his correspondence with William Piper and from Piper's letters to the *Illawarra Mercury*. William Piper was born at Tongarra in 1843 and lived in the district till his death in 1927.

Old Pioneer's Reminiscences of Illawarra are undoubtedly a delightful read containing many clues as to what might have happened and very worth while reading for that reason. None the less extreme care is called for in using this book as source material; dates are wrong, names are spelt wrongly or are just wrong and so on.

Other reminiscences are scattered throughout the *Mercury* over the years such as William Croft's *Reminiscences of Port Kembla* published 13 February 1897 and articles by "Shamrock" entitled *50 YEARS AGO* appear in the issues of 8 March 1902 and 23 April the same year. I would be delighted if someone could tell me who "Shamrock" was. In one article he gives a very good discription of people suffering in the stocks in the early days but unfortunately lards his writing with a very distressing attempt at sounding Irish.

I have often thought of the hardened and cruel officials there used to be here in olden toimes from the P.M. down to "Davy the flogger". About 60 years ago the fixtures known as "stocks" as a mode of punishment for small offences were situated in the Market square, one on each side of the pathway about 30 feet from the turnstyle near the convint. The prisoner's seat was a plain hard-wood plank on blocks wid their legs and hands locked into holes in planks set on edge. Their legs were at right angles wid the body, and no rail to support the back.

A.P. Doyle

1. *Reminiscences of Illawarra* Illawarra Historical Publications, Box 1395, Wollongong. 1987, M. Organ [Ed].
2. Death certificate.

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I have often thought of the hardened and cruel officials there used to be here in olden toimes from the P.M. down to "Davy the flogger". About 60 years ago the fixtures known as "stocks" as a mode of punishment for small offences were situated in the Market square, one on each side of the pathway about 30 feet from the turnstyle near the convent. The prisoner's seat was a plain hard-wood plank on blocks wid their legs and hands locked into holes in planks set on edge. Their legs were at right angles wid the body, and no rail to support the back.

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