

THE ANDREWS FAMILY OF WOLLONGONG AND TROOPER FRANK ANDREWS - A BOER WAR CASUALTY

(continued from *February Bulletin*)

Trooper Frank Andrews

Frank Andrews was born in Wollongong on 1 April 1880 and baptised at St. Michael's Church of England with his sister Clara on 5 August following. According to his niece Mrs Everard he was well liked by the local residents and a competent horseman, honing his equestrian skills in the open paddocks around North Wollongong, and possibly at the racecourse then operated by Theodore Bode, the original proprietor of the North Wollongong Hotel from 1878.

At one stage Frank worked for the Mayor of Wollongong, William McKenzie. A. P. Fleming in his book *The Wollongong Rest Park* gives a brief biography of Frank and account of his death, along with details of the subsequent public campaign which resulted in the erection of a memorial water fountain and plaque in his honour. The following is a brief summary of Fleming's account plus additional information gleaned from Mrs Everard's reminiscences and other sources. Hopefully a more detailed account of Trooper Andrews' Boer War experiences will appear in the near future.

Sometime around December 1899 - when Olive was just four months old - Frank Andrews volunteered for the Imperial Bushmen Regiment, a local collection of hardy bushmen who could "ride, shoot, and find their way about" (Murray, p85), and were to be pitted against the Boers of South Africa. Judging from later accounts and letters published in local newspapers Frank was accompanied to South Africa by a number of Illawarra volunteers. Over 16,000 Australians eventually fought in the conflict.

War had broken out on 11 October 1899 and shortly thereafter the *New South Wales Citizens' Bushmen* was got up by public subscription and embarked for South Africa at the end of February 1900. By December the British War Office was calling on Australia to provide more mounted troops and hardy bushmen. This resulted in the formation of a second Bushmen Regiment, namely the *Imperial Bushmen Regiment*, to which Frank Andrews was attracted.

The Imperial Bushmen regiment, consisting of 40 officers, 722 men, 800 horses and 6 carts, left Sydney on 23 April 1900 aboard the *Armenian* and reached Rhodesia in June. According to Mrs Everard Frank supplied his own horse and saddle for the expedition. The Imperial Bushmen initially saw action relieving the Eland's River garrison (4 & 5 August); Marco River (6 August); occupying Ottoshoop, a small town north-east of Mafeking in the Transvaal, on 14 August; Buffel's Hoik (18 & 19 August); Jacobsdal (22 August); and Malmani (27 August).

During Frank Andrew's period of service the Imperial Bushmen served as part of the 2nd Brigade Rhodesian Field Force under Lt. General Sir Frederick Carrington. Frank was a member of "A" Company, under the command of a Captain Ryrie (Murray, pp85-105). The circumstances of his death at Ottoshoop on 26 August 1900 are outlined by Ryrie as follows:

It took place the other day whilst we were out patrolling. The poor fellow was shot in the back when we were retiring from a position . . . I as captain can truthfully say that there was not a better man in my company . . . respected by all his comrades and died like a true soldier - I had him buried here in the cemetery by Mr. Reynolds, our Church of England Chaplain, and he was taken there on a gun carriage attended by a large crowd of his regiment.

It appears that Frank was shot on the 26th and died immediately from his wounds. He was buried the following day. Notice of his death was published in the *Illawarra Mercury* of 8 September, suggesting the family had been informed relatively quickly. Various items in the paper later that month made reference to the circumstances of his death, and included letters from other Illawarra soldiers fighting in the Transvaal. His personal stirrups and a few other mementos were eventually returned to Wollongong by Captain Ryrie who afterwards became a good friend of the family. The stirrups were silver-plated and mounted to be hung by the fireplace in Bourke Street. A brief biography of Frank appeared in the *South Coast Times* of 22 December 1900, accompanied by a photograph of him, supposedly in uniform.

Frank Andrews was only 20 at the time of his death, and one of 251 Australians to suffer such a fate, with another 267 succumbing to disease whilst in South Africa. Of the Imperial Bushmen, 1 officer and 20 others were killed or died and the rest returned to Australia in July 1901. The fact that Frank had been shot in the back would have made it all the more difficult for his family to bear. His mother was shattered by the news and never fully recovered from the shock.

Less than two months after his death members of the local community had raised the idea of a public memorial to Frank Andrews. This resulted in the getting up of a committee to raise funds, culminating in the unveiling of the memorial water fountain on 2 June 1902. The ceremony was performed by Rev. J.A. Reynolds who had originally buried Frank, and attended by his fellow Boer War veterans from the district, including Lt. O'Brien and Troopers Meredith and Smith. The monument was of carved sandstone with a marble water fountain, the structure being designed and built by F. Rose of Wollongong.

The Frank Andrews monument is significant in its rarity and in pre-dating the many monuments erected after the incidents at Gallipoli. Another local Boer War monument was erected in Shellharbour to commemorate the death of Samuel

Charles Atchison at Rensburg on 22 February 1900, again got up by public subscription and serving to forever remind us of the ultimate price paid by these sons of Illawarra in their fight for the British Empire.

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Acknowledgements

In the compilation of this article I would like to thank Mrs. Olive Everard for generously giving of her time and reminiscences during the interview. Acknowledgement is also due to the late A.P. Fleming, and as ever I would like to thank Peter Doyle for supplying details of the Andrews family history.

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