

REEVE RECORDS

George Gresham Reeve, one of the most enthusiastic founders of the Society of Australian Genealogists, was born in 1875 on the Ovens River near Beechworth Victoria, as Joseph George Reeve, the eldest son of Joseph Reeve and Ellen Hickson. The family moved to Ballarat, and then in 1876 George's father Joseph took up a selection at Yackandandah.¹ Between 1903 and 1908 Reeve moved to New South Wales and was working as a labourer in Cobar. He was now calling himself George Gresham Reeve.



Descendants of Hawkesbury Pioneers

SAG Manuscript and Images Collection 05/000004

At some time after the 1880s Reeve made the acquaintance of Henry Lawson and seems to have followed a similar itinerant lifestyle. Reeve's niece described him as,

*a personal friend of Henry Lawson who loved everything Australian.*²



Sophia ARNDELL

SAG Manuscript and Images Collection 5/000054

After Lawson's death in September 1922 Reeve became a member of the Henry Lawson Memorial Committee. Here he made the acquaintance of TD Mutch who was to join the Society of Australian Genealogists after Reeve's death and was to be elected a Fellow of the Society in 1946. Mutch's newspaper cutting collection is held by the Society in Series 13 in 69 files.

It is difficult to imagine what would have encouraged a man such as Reeve to begin the search of genealogical endeavours, unless it was the fact that his grandmother was the daughter of Surgeon John White who had arrived in New South Wales with the First Fleet. Maybe Reeve's interest in his own ancestors lead him to his absorbing research in genealogy and family history. Reeve became interested in the Hawkesbury region around 1913, just what caught his attention is unknown, but a number of books and articles had been published on the Hawkesbury prior to Reeve commencing his work.

Reeve moved to Sydney and in 1920 he began working as a journalist. He wrote a long series of articles for the Hawkesbury papers that collectively would make the best history of the settlement of the Hawkesbury River that has been written. Reeve had taken a great interest in genealogical and historical matters, largely with the Hawkesbury pioneer families and had written a number of publications. Reeve's first known publication was his research on the Loder family published in the Windsor & Richmond Gazette in November 1921. Eighteen months later he took his fellow historians William Freame and Dr Cameron to task in the same paper, regarding their published inaccuracies concerning the Ebenezer church.

Why did not these gentlemen make their investigations from the original records – the only true source – original sources? I shall hope to always speak and write reverently of people who are dead and cannot reply, but none the less, whether deceased or alive in the flesh if historical writers make statements which are untrue or found unauthentic on investigations, I claim the right of correction; same as I wish others to correct me when I make mistakes unintentionally in my writings. I do not claim immunity or infallibility from error.³

Neither Freame nor Reeve appear to have published in the Royal Australian Historical Society Journal during the period preferring rather to bring their research to the widest possible audience via the press, Freame in Parramatta and Reeve at the Hawkesbury. While Reeve was researching the Wiseman family he approached Freame for information. Freame's reply tells us something about his research methodology;

Probably I do know a good deal about S.W. but honestly, I do not feel justified in dragging every bit of family history into the limelight. There are many things that should not concern the public, were I to tell everyone all the things I discover I'd cause no end of trouble.⁴

Between about 1924 and 1931 Reeve lived as a lodger at 305 Annandale St., Annandale.⁵ He discovered the Mitchell Library and was recognised as a frequent user. He began to collect information on the pioneer families of the Hawkesbury and was credited with knowing more of the genealogy, history and folklore of that region than the families who still lived on the original grants.⁶

At times Reeve has been criticised for his inaccuracies, but with no access to modern research tools like the Birth Death and Marriage indexes Reeve had to make do with what he had been told by family members and what he had transcribed from headstones. For example, in his Chaseling Family file, Reeve has transcribed the inscription on Thomas Chaseling's vault. He has omitted the year of Margaret Chaseling's death together with her age. He has indicated his omissions with a dash. This would imply to a researcher that this part of the headstone is illegible, but this is not the case. He adds the comment that Margaret was Thomas' second wife, making it appear that it is part of the inscription. Reeve also changed the age of Elizabeth Chaseling from 33 to 48 because he understood that Elizabeth was the first wife of Thomas Chaseling and was supposed to have had her first child in 1797. He did his mathematics and discovered Elizabeth would have only been aged two in 1797 so he has altered her age in his



notes, but it was too late to alter it in his published version. In reality Elizabeth was the second wife whom Thomas married in 1816/17. This myth seems to have been perpetuated.

Others have praised his attention to detail and his generosity with his research. Reeve had a wonderful memory for events connected to each of the pioneer families. He would follow information back to its source and wrote hundreds of letters to people he thought should be able to confirm his information. Reeve was generous with his research findings, after spending weeks hunting for some particular piece of information he would pass it on to any researcher interested. During March 1925 Reeve was doing research relating to the Hall family.⁷ He managed to find and interview ex-convict servants of William and John Hall who had travelled miles to go to their respective funerals. These men told Reeve;

You couldn't make the Halls proud. They wouldn't send any of their servants to be flogged.⁸

Reeve was the preserver and transcriber of lone grave of John Howarth 1804 at Wilberforce, and brought it to the attention of Hawkesbury Shire Council.⁹ He also made other enquiries concerning lone graves on country properties.

Errol Lea-Scarlett, who set up the SAG Manuscript and Image Collection, later described Reeve as someone who had all the hallmarks of a good historian;

*Generous with his research, who followed information back to its original source and included reference to his sources.*¹⁰

Some of Reeve's best work was done in connection with the tracing of the second generation of the Hawkesbury and Nepean pioneers in their search for and establishment on the grazing lands of the Lachlan River. However, although Reeve made extensive research into other people's families all he said about his own ancestry was that he was;

*The grandson of William Watney Reeve who as a widower married Ann White one of the daughters of Surgeon John White.*¹¹

Reeve published as series of *Back to Town* series; Wangaratta, Crookwell, Warren, Mudgee and asked that copies be collected from his house at Sefton for the SAG Library. Apparently, this was never done because there are none of these pamphlets in the current collection. This research series seems to pre-date Reeve's research on the Hawkesbury.

George Reeve also had a number of publications regarding his pioneer research. These included;

1921 *Historic Windsor House – The Loder Mansion*, W&RG 25 Nov 1921

1923 *Ebenezer Pioneers of the Hawkesbury*, W&RG 6 April 1923

1923 contra William Freame, W & RG 13 Apr 1923

1925 follow up letter relating to above W&RG 20 Feb & 10 Jul 1925

1925 *Henry Lawson The Man and his Work*, W&RG 30 Nov 1925

1928 *Chaplain Samuel Marsden and his Five Famous Daughters*, W& RG 13 Jul 1928 – 24 Aug 1928



1931 *Oldest Church in Australia* W&RG 26 Sep 1930

1931 Historic Tombstones and First Pioneers of the Lachlan, 25 Sep 1931

1931 *Old Hawkesbury Houses*, mentioned in W&RG 9 Oct 1931

1932 *John White R.N.* W&RG 8 Feb 32 by 'Flinders Barr' [sic]

In 1932 when Reeve was living in 6 Waldron Rd Sefton when he became a foundation member of the Society of Australian Genealogists.

Reeve was one of four people who planned to convene a public meeting to form an Australian Genealogical Society.

Those interested in launching the organisation are enthusiasts who have long considered the need of there being an existence of a body to tabulate the genealogies and descents of old Australian pioneer families.¹²

Although he had been described by Herbert Rumsey, *as a man of little education*, Reeve acted as secretary at the inaugural meeting of the Society on 24th August 1932.¹³ At one of the early meetings Reeve proposed that members of Council should be Australian born, which would have necessarily excluded the English born Rumsey. The motion was defeated.¹⁴ Reeve was elected Vice President of the Society on 30th September 1932, but unfortunately due to his serious illness he was unable to attend regularly. Reeve apologised to the Society for his inability to attend meetings.

In September 1932, Reeve was admitted to Prince Alfred Hospital. In February 1933 he was admitted to Windsor Hospital and was still engaged with his correspondence in Windsor Hospital only a couple of months prior to his death. George Gresham Reeve died suddenly on 23rd April 1933 at Windsor Hospital and was buried in the Presbyterian Section in the little Riverside Cemetery at Ebenezer, near the church whose history he had placed on record.¹⁵ Although it was believed at the time that he was preparing his will he had nothing much to leave behind apart from his research.

In July 1933 the children of Wilberforce School raised a subscription to erect a headstone to their local historian. Further donations came from a granddaughter of the Rev. Samuel Marsden and the Council of the Society of Australian Genealogists. In June 1946 a sum of money was sent to Reeve's sister in order to erect a headstone which has the briefest of inscriptions.

Value as a Research Tool

The George Gresham Reeve collection is a valuable research tool in two distinct ways. Firstly, the collection highlights Reeve as a genealogist and historian, with a particular interest in First Fleet Families and the pioneer families of the Hawkesbury district. The second area of focus is George Gresham Reeve as one of the founding members of the Society of Australian Genealogists.

Guide to the Collection

Reeve had intended to arrange that his genealogical manuscripts to be placed in the care of the society in order that they may be available for permanent record. However, with his death coming suddenly there was no will left. But by arrangement with his sister the society took care of the accumulation of papers that he left. Unfortunately, Reeve's research was left in an incomplete state at his death and we do not know whether he intended to publish a book on his findings.



On his death Reeve's collection was passed to Herbert Rumsey who sorted and arranged them. The Shelf list for the Reeve Records lists 687 files. A description of his papers was first published in the Australian Genealogist in 1935.¹ These papers now form Series 7 in the SAG Manuscript and Images Collection. Reeve's collection was among the first collections indexed into the Old General Index.

The Reeve Papers were sorted as follows:

Correspondence - Several letters and notes in the Research enquiries files between 1929 and 1933.

Newspaper cutting collection - Reeve's recognisable scrawl is to be found in a number of the Newspaper Cutting series volumes.

Manuscript collection - By 1932 Reeve had made a study of Australian Families 1788 – 1888 and prepared at least 500 pedigrees.

Photographic collection - The Reeve manuscript collection contained a number of photographs which were extracted and sorted into 25 files. Most of the photos depict members of Hawkesbury Pioneer families, though there are a number of clergymen in the collection as well. There are only two photos of buildings; the Buttsworth House which is still standing, and the Tumbeldown Barn, near Riverstone, alas no more.

The Reeve Papers include;

62/000013 - 1938 Windsor & Richmond Gazette NSW

Arch Gray Collection - Images 0803 to 0874. News cuttings taken from predominantly New South Wales newspapers of the period 1950 thru 1990, usually more than one cutting per page. Scanned images of pages are available to purchase. SAG Members may use the Search button to search on any of the Item References fields, and you may sort by clicking on the grey column header.

62/000111 - 1933, Ebenezer Cemetery NSW (Funeral)

AGCI Collection - Images 0949 to 1012. Eclectic collection of news cuttings from mainly Australian newspapers of the period 1980 through 1999, usually more than one cutting per page. Some of the index records specify the source newspaper and others the event being reported upon. Scanned images of pages are available to purchase. SAG Members may use the Search button to search on any of the Item References fields, and you may sort by clicking on the grey column header.

62/000111 - 1933 Windsor Hospital NSW (Death)

AGCI Collection - Images 0949 to 1012. Eclectic collection of news cuttings from mainly Australian newspapers of the period 1980 through 1999, usually more than one cutting per page. Some of the index records specify the source newspaper and others the event being reported upon. Scanned images of pages are available to purchase. SAG Members may use the Search button to search on any of the Item References fields, and you may sort by clicking on the grey column header.

04/006219 - CASTLEREAGH, NSW

Castlereagh NSW cemetery Monumental Inscriptions by George G Reeve. 2 pages

82/000034 - SWEENEY, Mrs Leah

Correspondence from Mrs Leah Sweeney to H Rumsey re the death of George Reeve
Mrs Sweeney, nee Everingham, of Abercrombie St Sydney, Correspondence to H Rumsey 15 & 23 May 1933 re death of George Reeve, and her husband's death a week later - NO Research requests

04/028055 - George Reeve



Research on George Reeve (1875 - 1933) undertaken while the Reeve Records (Series 7) were being checked and indexed into MIDAS

82/000786 - LAWSON Henry

11/6/1/28 57/49 Research enquiry from M H Doering re her ancestors

82/000786 - REEVE Fanny

Research enquiry from M H Doering re her ancestors. Fanny Reeve, sister of George G Reeve, married Thompson, mother of Marjory Doering, died circa 1950, another sister still alive in 1957, living in Sydney

82/000786 - REEVE George

Research enquiry from M H Doering re her ancestors. George Reeve thought to be name of father of Fanny and George Reeve

04/017190 - George REEVE died 23 April 1933 aged 57 years

69 Index cards donated by P W Gledhill from his collection, covering surnames mainly H-P; information contained is mainly related to burials in the Hawkesbury and Nepean areas of NSW

04/019772 - newspaper article in 1928 re Tumbledown Barn

Research relating to the Tumbledown Barn Eastern Creek near Riverstone, New South Wales. File comprises a history of the area and map showing early land owners (7 pp)

05/000094 - REEVE George

Small photograph of Florence Stuart 1930, inscription on reverse

04/019915 - REEVE George historian

A large file of correspondence, research & family tree charts on William & Sarah Stubbs (per Coromandel in 1802) and their descendants of the Hawkesbury River region; see SAG library collection for books based on this file: A6/STU/5, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f

82/000034 - REEVE George

11/6/1/3 33/21 * Correspondence from Mrs Leah Sweeney to H Rumsey re the death of George Reeve of SAG, died 1933, friend of Mr George & Mrs Leah Sweeney

82/001153 - George Reeve

REEVE George one of the founders of SAG died 1933, his letter - John Reeve 1804-1875 brother his grandfather William Watney Reeve, his grandmother was a daughter of Surgeon White of the First Fleet
11/6/1/34 63/24 * Research enquiry from Mr H Carter re John Reeve circa 1804-1875

18/001890 -

Incoming correspondence from Herbert Rumsey of 'Vernham's Dean' Dundas NSW 1936 - 1956 giving information relating to SAG activities pioneer genealogist

82/000786 -

11/6/1/28 57/49 * Research enquiry from M H Doering re her Ancestors. George Reeve, Genealogist (Foundation Member of SAG) died April 1933, brother of Fanny Reeve, so uncle of Marjory Doering

04/016009 - wrote an article on Chaplain Sam Marsden

5 chapters (16 typed pages) written by George Reeves entitled 'Chaplain Samuel Marsden and his five famous daughters' which were printed as a series in the Windsor & Richmond Gazette New South Wales in 1928



18/001729 - At Wollongong or Sydney in 1934-35

Diary of Rev O B Waldron McCarthy, 1st January 1934 to 31st December 1935. Includes notes and index. 173 typewritten and hand annotated pages in self bound volume. (Pagination varies - is in roughly 3 sequences). Mentions many Wollongong residents, and friends in Sydney, during the early 1930s, all listed in index, also businesses and events of the time. Includes biographical notes on many of the families included. SEE INDEX IN DIARY FOR PAGE NUMBER REFERENCES.

18/001757 - Obituary, died Windsor NSW 1933

SAG members (miscellaneous): 3 memorial cards, 1 newspaper obituary, 2 letters responding to genealogical enquiries. 3 cards, 1 newspaper clipping, 1 typed and 2 handwritten sheets. (Appears to be part of a larger collection transferred to Society Archives at unknown date).

93/000018 - 1927, Singleton NSW

Research on Marcroft family

70/000160 - 1927, Singleton NSW

Entries from the 1913 The Lone Hand magazine of historical events in Australia, plus newspapers cuttings from the early 1930s about historic buildings. It mentions early explorers, governors and prominent persons but has no biographical information.

70/000200 - 1928, Richmond, Windsor NSW

Sydney newspapers; Windsor & Richmond Gazette 1928-1934. Mostly articles about early NSW history. Pages 129,130 contain death notices.

82/000021 -

Intended to undertake search re Rose family but concern "I fear I gave him a shock in Hospital when I told him what Mt Gilead or Appin man had done". 11/6/1/3 33/8 Research enquiry from Mrs L Gardiner concerning family of Thomas Rose arrived 1793 & Rose family fortunes & other early Thomas Rose's in Australia

03/000562 -

Handwritten letter from Miss E E Bowd, Wilberforce relating to John Howarth's lonely grave (d1804) (2 pp)

03/000662 -

Twenty-two pages of handwritten pages of notes, correspondence and certificates relating to Charles Simpson Hall 1924-1925, (was Member H9); see also correspondence at 80/387

04/000367 -

Geo. G. Reeve: Ebenezer Pioneers of the Hawkesbury 1923

04/001441 -

Loder family: notes

07/000078 - Author: A Night at the Green Dragon, Wilberforce

A Night at the Green Dragon Wilberforce; miscellaneous research notes & clipping (50pp)

07/000632 - Author: Ebenezer Pioneers of the Hawkesbury

Miscellaneous magazine articles from Life, May-Jul 1910; Lone Hand, Jan 1913; Centennial Magazine Thomas Heney The heart of Australia 1890; Munsey Magazine 1907. (629p)

07/000632 - Author: The Log of the 'Mayflower'

Miscellaneous magazine articles from Life, May-Jul 1910; LoneHand, Jan 1913; Centennial Magazine Thomas Heney, The Heart of Australia 1890; Munsey's Magazine 1907. (629p)



82/000001 -

11/6/1/1 * Correspondence pre-1932 is mainly replies to original letters which have not survived, also some documents listing families; These letters etc. are not individually numbered or identified by Correspondent letter from Sydney Diocesan Registrar answering query re Rev John Troughton

82/000023 -

Article in Windsor & Richmond Gazette 15 Oct 1925, re Singleton family, and later correspondence with H Lloyd Jan 1933. 11/6/1/3 33/10 * Research enquiry from H H Lloyd re William Singleton convict from Yarmouth SFK, living Hawkesbury River

02/000283 - REEVE Miriam (wife of George Reeve nee Miriam Walker)

Small album of carte de visite photographs; front cover has been cut to house a photograph of the owner Miriam Reeve; only 10 other photographs remain - it is clear many others have been removed.

82/001153 - REEVE William Watney

11/6/1/34 63/24 * Research enquiry from Mr H Carter re John Reeve circa 1804-1875

William Watney REEVE grandfather of George Reeve (of SAG), George's letter says his brother was John Reeve 1804-1875, not proven, as a widower he married Ann White, daughter of Surgeon White.

¹ Victorian Birth Death and Marriage Index

² Marjory Doering (niece) to SAG, n.d. 1957

³ W&RG 13th April 1923

⁴ Freame to Reeve 5th April 1924, SAG PR 6/17

⁵ dates from his correspondence, Reeve File, SAG Members File RO 1. He does not appear in Sands Directories

⁶ undated newspaper clipping, SAG NC Vol 12 p 5

⁷ SAG PR 3/662

⁸ W&RG 10th July 1925

⁹ E Bowd to Miss Thomas, 25th Nov 1937, SAG PR 3/562

¹⁰ Lea-Scarlett, op.cit.

¹¹ Reeve to Mary Collitts, n.d. Reeve Records 7/488

¹² Undated newspaper clipping (1932) NC Vol 10 p 91

¹³ Errol Lea-Scarlett, Up and Down, Then Up Again, SAG Golden Jubilee History p 19

¹⁴ Lea-Scarlett, op.cit p 19

¹⁵ Tom Mutch seems to have had access to Reeve's Death Certificate. It was later transcribed by Arch Gray.



