



## *The First Settlement City Gazette*

The Journal of the  
**Redcliffe & District Family History Group Inc.**  
Established 5th March 1987



**Specimen** twenty-dollar Australia note with the face of **Mary Reibey née Haydock**. Our twenty-dollar note has carried her face since 1994.

Mary was born in 1777 in Bury, Lancashire, England. Her life's journey would include being orphaned at a young age; a horse thief at the age of 13; sentenced to death but changed to transportation to the new colony at Sydney, Australia; then female trader and later a very powerful woman in our colonial history.

Mary's story can be found on pages 3 to 9.

**November 2023**

**Redcliffe and District Family History Group Inc.**

**Library Address:** Clontarf Beach Scout Den, Cnr Maine Road and Isobel Street, Clontarf, Qld. 4019  
The Scout Den, which has wheelchair access, also has a dedicated all weather car park.

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                            Shadow Minister for **Defence Personnel**  
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**MEMBERSHIP FEES**

**Financial Year 1st July to 30th June**

New Membership Joining Fee	\$ 6.00
Family Membership	\$ 40.00
Single Membership	\$ 35.00

**LIBRARY HOURS.** Tuesday & Thursday mornings 9.30 am - 12.30 pm.

**Closed:** Mid December to late January.

**GENERAL MEETINGS** of Members are held at the Group's Library on the second Thursday of every second month from 11.00 a.m. Members are encouraged to attend.

**NEWSLETTER.** Members receive a copy of the Group's newsletter, "*The First Settlement City Gazette*" by e-mail during the months of **March, July and November**. Hard copies are also available. The newsletters are also available on the Group's website shown above.

R&DFHG has reciprocal visiting rights with Redlands Genealogical Society and Toowoomba & Darling Downs Family History Society. We look forward to a long association with both societies.

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**R&DFHG extends thanks to**  
**The Hon Luke Howarth MP, Member for Petrie and**  
**his office staff who kindly print and collate this Newsletter.**

**Dates to Remember:** Thursday, 14 December, 2023. Final Day with break-up and morning tea.  
 Tuesday, 30 January, 2024. Library Open at the Den.  
 February 2024 - State and National Archive training (date to be agreed).  
 March 2024 - 'Legacy' Family History Training (date to be agreed).

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**AGM.** The AGM for our group was held on Thursday, 17 August, 2023 and was attended by sixteen members and our three patrons, the Hon. Luke Howarth, MP and Councillors Sandra Ruck and Karl Winchester.

L to R. Hon. Luke Howarth, Councillor Sandra Ruck and Councillor Karl Winchester. A photo from a previous meeting.



Very comprehensive reports were presented by the committee. At the AGM conclusion, the attendees gathered around for refreshments and a chat. Thank you to those who attended and also to those who provided morning tea.



**Standing.** L to R. Dan Davies, Cheryl Salisbury, Joan Flack, Ted Flack, Mary Ludlow, Vera Arratoon, Kerry Graves, Richard Lacey, Sam Gill, Roger Hendey, Graham Prothero and Councillor Karl Winchester.

**Seated.** Councillor Sandra Ruck, Sarina Corbo, Rona Davies, Jeanette Ryan and Dianne Hendey. The Hon Luke Howarth took the photo.

**Redcliffe Remembers.** Two of our members have relatives with streets and a road named after them.

**Bob Kirkwood:** In Margate, **Haskins** and **Kirkwood** Streets and, in Clontarf, **Pikett** Street. In our March 2024 newsletter, more information will be provided.

**Cheryl Salisbury:** In Margate, **Barron** Road. The story of her step-ancestor, Roderick Barron, was featured in our July 2023 newsletter.

**Good News Department.** We are pleased to welcome our new member, **Karen Farrington.**



**Recycling.** Our member, **Helen Ellis**, continues to diligently recycle the bottles and cans which our members bring to the clubhouse. When the collection is large enough, Helen takes them to a bottle depot. **Thank you, Helen.** So, members, please keep up your good work with this project.

**Milestones.** As we are nearing the end of the year, we are pleased to congratulate those members whose birthdays have ended or will end in a zero.

**Garage Sale.** Our second garage sale occurred on Saturday, 7th of October with great success. Thank you so much for all your contributions and assistance.

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**Mary Reibey née Haydock.**  
**(12 May 1777 - 30 May 1855).**

The only surviving portrait of Mary Reibey.  
Taken in her later years.

**Life in England.** Mary was born in Bury, Lancashire, England to a yeoman family. This means that her father was a freeholder; holding and cultivating a small estate.

Mary received a good education; including the basics of reading and writing. This was significantly different to so many other young girls in that era.

Sadly, her parents died young and Mary then lived with her grandmother who put her into service. Apparently, she did not like this work, because, at the age of 13, she ran away. During the following high-spirited escapade (which could be attributed to a lack of parental control), Mary stole a horse and tried to sell it at a town some miles away. At the time, she had disguised herself as a boy and was calling herself “James Burrow”.

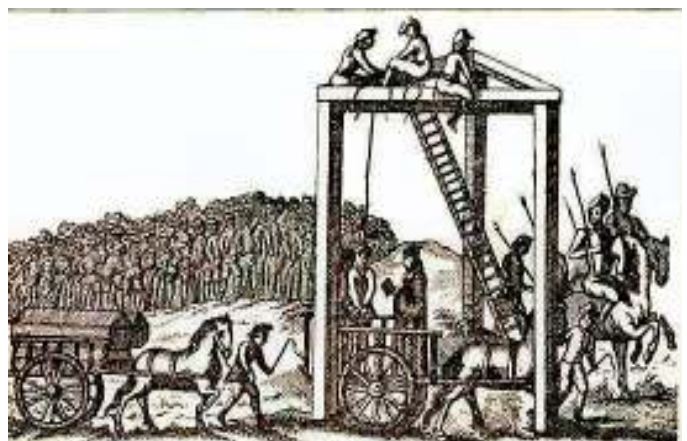
Mary’s attempt to sell the horse failed and, consequently, was arrested in August 1791. She protested that she only borrowed the horse to get home, but the local court, in Stafford, Suffolk, did not buy her story.

By the 1770’s, the so-called British “Bloody Code” held 220 crimes which carried the death penalty. Almost all were crimes against property and, if the stolen property was worth more than 12 **pence** (one shilling), it attracted the death penalty.

A sketch of the permanent gallows at Tyburn in London which stood where Marble Arch now stands.

A hanging involved a three-mile cart ride in public from Newgate Prison to the hanging site.

Huge crowds collected along the way and followed the accused to Tyburn.

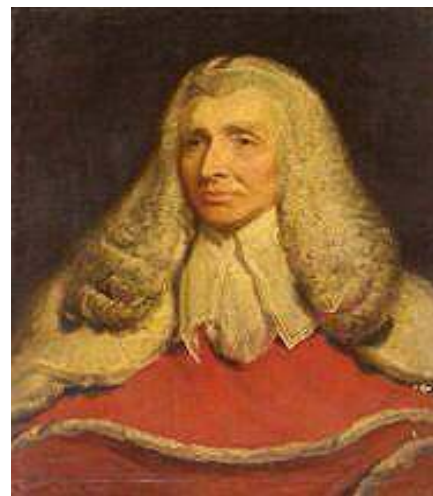


Since that stolen horse was worth more than a shilling, Mary was in trouble! She was duly convicted as a felon and sentenced to “death by hanging” by Judge John Heath.

However, her bad luck changed. The judicial system had begun to believe that the Code was too harsh and transportation was a more humane alternative to execution.

After taking into consideration Mary’s young age, Judge Heath, changed his mind and, instead of hanging, he sentenced her to seven years’ transportation to Sydney, Australia.

Now aged 15 years, Mary arrived in Sydney on the *Royal Admiral* in October 1792 - just 4 years after the founding of the colony. Her work assignment was as a nursemaid in the household of a military officer. Mary had escaped death and she could now have a future. Consequently, she settled down to her work and her new life in Sydney. No more escapades!



Judge John Heath (1736 - 1816).

**Life in Australia.** Because there were very few women in the colony, women convicts were emancipated if they married free settlers. In **September, 1794**, (two years after her arrival), Mary married **Thomas Reibey**, aged 25 years, and, thus, became an emancipated woman. Thomas was an Irishman in the service of the East India Co. and had arrived on the *Britannia* in Sydney early in **1794**.

Contemporary painting. North of Sydney Cove, **1794**.

Following their marriage, Thomas was granted land on the Hawkesbury River where they farmed and he also commenced a cargo business from that area to Sydney.

It appears that Thomas was the first free settler (apart from the military) to trade.



**Business Activities.** Over the next few years, Thomas and Mary acquired several farms on the Hawkesbury River. By 1803, Thomas owned three small boats with which he traded in coal, cedar, furs and skins between Sydney and the areas of the Hunter and Hawkesbury Rivers.

In 1805, Thomas became engaged in sealing in Bass Strait and, in 1807, started trading with the Pacific Islands with his schooner, *Mercury*. Then, from 1809, Thomas extended his trading enterprises to China and India.

Evidently, Thomas was an astute trader who kept apart from the squabbles of the then-Governor William Bligh and the NSW military corps.

**Governor William Bligh** (1754 - 1817). He was governor of N.S.W from 1806 - 1808 before being deposed by the ringleaders of the so-called infamous “Rum Rebellion”. Bligh was recalled to England and was replaced by Lachlan Macquarie who would now be the next governor.

Earlier, when the Reibey family had moved back to Sydney, Thomas’s commercial undertakings began to prosper; enabling them, in 1804, to build a substantial stone residence on a further grant of land.



William Bligh. 1814. Artist Alexander Huey.

This was near what is now Macquarie Place and Reiby Place. They named it *Entally House* after the Entally suburb in Calcutta, India. Later, in 1817, it was converted to the *Bank of New South Wales*. This property was demolished in 1880.



Reiby Lane in modern-day Sydney.

After an illness, believed to have been contracted during his previous trading trip to Bengal in India, Thomas sadly died on 5 April 1811.

Mary Reibey, now aged 34 years, was a widow and left with seven children and in entire control of numerous business concerns.

However, Mary was no stranger to this task, having managed her husband’s affairs during his frequent and long absences from Sydney.

Because of her husband’s enterprises, Mary would become a woman of considerable wealth and she continued to expand her business interests. In 1812, Mary opened a new warehouse in George Street and, in 1817, extended her shipping operations with the purchase of further vessels. By 1820, she held 1000 acres of land (half by grant) and was said to be worth £20,000. In today’s money, it would be close to **five million** Australian dollars.

Also, Mary made extensive investments in city property. By 1828, it was said that she had built ‘many elegant and substantial buildings in Macquarie Place, near the King’s Wharf and also in the centre of George Street’. Some of her other buildings still exist today. One example, in 1820, Mary had built a house called *Reibeycroft* for her daughter, Penelope. This is now listed on the Register of the National Estate.



*Reibeycroft,*  
Sydney. Built in 1820.



Other buildings are as follows:



*Figtree House*, Hunters Hill, NSW.  
Built c. 1836.

This yellow-painted building is situated on the shore of the Lane Cove River and is listed on the Register of the National Estate.

Also, Mary, the matriarch of the family, had obtained a grant of 300 acres of land in Tasmania for her son, **Thomas Haydock Reibey**. He had settled there and, in 1819, would build a homestead which would be called *Entally* along with some outbuildings. Perhaps a sentimental gesture related to his parents' home in Sydney.

These buildings are now historic houses in Hadspen on the outskirts of Launceston, in Northern Tasmania.

*Entally House*,  
Launceston.



**Governor Lachlan Macquarie.**  
(1762 - 1824).



Mary was well accepted in Sydney's social circles, and became a close friend of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and Elizabeth, his wife.

**Elizabeth Macquarie** by an unknown artist. (1778 - 1835).

Macquarie served as the fifth Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821 and had a leading role in the social, economic, and architectural development of the colony.

Macquarie is considered by historians to have had a crucial influence on the transition of New South Wales from a penal colony to a free settlement and, therefore, to have played a major role in the shaping of Australia society in the early years of the 19th century.

While seeking to promote morality and orderliness, Macquarie favoured the liberal treatment of ex-convicts, known as *emancipists*, appointing them to prominent government positions and providing generous land grants.

As part of his thoughts re the colony's development, Macquarie sent a request to his superiors in England to establish a bank, but when it was refused, he went ahead anyway with his plan.

However, rather than establish a bank with government funds, he did it by public subscription. Macquarie, his wife, Elizabeth, and Mary became three of the six founding shareholders. Another founder was ex-convict **Doctor William Redfern** whose life will be featured in our March 2024 newsletter.

This bank began trading out of Mary's Macquarie Place house in 1817. Originally, it was called the **Bank of New South Wales** but, in 1982, its name was changed to today's name of **Westpac**.

**Later Years.** Mary decided to return to England accompanied by her daughters. However, she stayed only one year and returned to Sydney in 1821. In the emancipist society of New South Wales, she had gained respect for her charitable works and her interest in the church and education. As such, in 1825, Mary was appointed one of the Governors of the Free Grammar School.



In **1828**, the first Colonial census was held. It is interesting to note that Mary had written “came free in 1821”. Yes, she had arrived back from England in 1821, as a free person, but this was only half-true. No mention of her first arrival in 1792 as a convict. Mary had firmly put that aspect of her life well and truly behind her.

By the late 1820’s, Mary was gradually retiring from active involvement in commerce. Her children were doing well and her three sons had founded the Tasmanian branch of the family.

**Thomas Haydock Reibey** (1796 - 1842).  
First-born son of Mary and Thomas Reibey.

They all followed their parents’ lead in mercantile and shipping ventures and had set up their lives successfully there. Later, her **grandson, Thomas Reibey II**, would become the Premier of Tasmania in 1876.

**Final Years.** Once fully retired, Mary built a house in Newtown, Sydney, where she lived until her death on 30 May 1855 from pneumonia. She was 78 years old. Mary Reiby was persevering and enterprising in everything she undertook,. She had become legendary in the colony as the successful business woman.



**Other Information.** At least three novels have been written based on Mary’s life as well as several articles. Also, in 1982, a television mini-series was made.

Sources: 1) Wikipedia. 2) [www.visitsydneyaustralia.com.au](http://www.visitsydneyaustralia.com.au). 3) Australian Dictionary of Biography.

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The members of the Redcliffe & District Family History Group extend their thanks to the Hon. Luke Howarth MP for his continuing support of the Group.

*The “First Settlement City Gazette” is kindly printed with the compliments of The Hon. Luke Howarth MP, Federal Member for Petrie and Sponsored by the following companies.*

A business card for Cooke & Hutchinson Lawyers. The top half is dark with the firm's name in white. The bottom half is light with contact details in dark text.

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