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(1845–1918)

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Forgotten Founder

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Back cover: Replica of a bronze relief of George Reid. The original was generously gifted to the Australian High Commission by the Reid family in 2018. It is now on permanent display in Australia House, London.

These two newspaper photographs of George and Flora Reid are the central shots of a full page of various Australian High Commission staff, taken in London on 24 July 1913.

Sir George and Lady Reid with their children, Douglas, Thelma and Clive, London, c. 1914.

About the author

Dr David Headon is a Canberra-based historian and cultural consultant. A regular commentator on cultural, political and social issues on ABC radio, he is a Foundation Fellow at the Australian Studies Institute (Australian National University) and an Associate in the Parliamentary Library. He was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001.

Acknowledgements

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The bulk of the photographs used in this publication were sourced from the collection of the National Library of Australia. Special mention must be given to the NLA's Emily Witt, who went above and beyond the call of duty when asked to respond to pressing external deadlines. In Scotland, Bryan Smith, a researcher in the Heritage Centre at the Paisley Central Library in Renfrewshire, provided me with some useful material otherwise impossible to access.

While it has been gratifying to have a number of key individuals and institutions keen to support the *First Eight Prime Ministers* project as it has evolved, I need to single out Dianne Heriot, for her unwavering enthusiasm from the start, and Professor Paul Pickering, Director of the Australian Studies Institute at the Australian National University. Paul's grasp of the wider possibilities of the original concept has produced a flagship enterprise for each of those institutions and organisations now on board – the National Museum of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the Victorian Parliamentary Library, the Australian High Commission (London) and the Britain–Australia Society.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful support I have had from the Reid family. A lunch in Sydney a few years ago with the granddaughter of George and Flora Reid, (the late) Anne Fairbairn, energised my interest in our early prime ministers. Over the last two years I have got to know Anne's son, Michael Body, along with Mrs Victoria Merrick, the Reids' great-granddaughter, and Mrs Ursula Reid, wife of the Reids' grandson Keith. They have given me their wholehearted support, for which I am very grateful indeed.

Contents

The Reid challenge

George Reid, Australia's fourth Prime Minister, c. 1905. Note the monocle, an item whimsically caricatured by the country's cartoonists.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that, in Australia today, George Houstoun Reid is virtually unknown. If the occasional politically engaged citizen recognises the name as that of our fourth Prime Minister, then he or she usually knows little else about him. The fault is ours, for Reid lived a full and fascinating life, in public and, as we will discover, in his private life as well. We should know far more about his significant legacy.

Reid was an early Prime Minister. He was also the Mother Colony of New South Wales' most important colonial Premier, Australia's first High Commissioner to London, and the first and only Australian to sit in both Australia's House of Representatives and the British House of Commons. Yet the sum of Reid's achievements, the catalogue of his curious habits and idiosyncrasies, his daring cultural leadership from a young age, his love of cricket and his many acts of decency and kindness reach well beyond his performance in public office.

Reid lived in turbulent times but he was always a figure, a larger-than-life figure, determined to meet conscientiously and purposefully the challenges of his era. If the later decades of the nineteenth century shaped and educated Reid culturally, politically and morally, then the twentieth century graduated him into a world at once more volatile and, too soon, embroiled in catastrophic world war. Reid refused to be intimidated by mounting pressures. This was his signature response always, calm in the face of adversity, something he probably learned from his Presbyterian minister father, whom he admired and loved. Throughout their productive lives, father and son acted upon the ideal of public service, the duty of service for others.

Some of Reid's contemporaries, especially his political opponents from other colonies, did not know what to make of him. The most prominent of his critics was Australia's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, who included a series of scathing observations of Reid in what is still the most entertaining 'insider' account of the federation era, the posthumously published *The Federal Story*.[1] This set of articles, retrieved by Deakin's daughter and son-in-law after his death and published for the first time in 1944, includes an intriguing 'Author's Note' by Deakin where he writes that although 'strictly truthful and fair', the pieces are 'very personal and unflinching in their candour'.

Readers familiar with *The Federal Story* would know that Deakin's array of striking portraits of friend and foe are certainly 'personal and unflinching', but at times they are neither truthful nor fair. For the entrenched Victorian Protectionist Deakin – dapper, trim, reserved, punctilious – the Free Trading New South Welshman George Reid – fat, occasionally dishevelled, extroverted, confident – represented everything that offended Deakin's delicate sensibilities. Of all the individual character descriptions in *The Federal Story*, none comes close to the caustic assessment of Reid. So, in Chapter Nine, we read:

> Even caricature has been unable to travesty [Reid's] extraordinary appearance, his immense, unwieldy, jelly-like stomach, always threatening to break his waist band, his little legs apparently bowed under its weight to the verge of their endurance, his thick neck rising behind his ears rounding to his many-folded chin. His protuberant blue eyes … expressionless until roused or half hidden in cunning … He walked with a staggering role like that of a sailor … he denied himself nothing that he fancied, sucking ice or sweetmeats between meals and then eating and drinking according to his fancy … He had no taste for literature, for art, for bric-a-brac or the study of the past. Newspapers satisfied his tastes; he was fond of society and social amusements, but even at the theatre his preferences were those of the crowd.[2]

It was Reid's misfortune that in the post-Second World War period a new generation of Australian historians had their ideas about Federation moulded, consciously or unconsciously, by the Victorian Deakin's version of the 'federal story', together with the accounts of a few other 'Federation-at-any-cost' politicians who aligned themselves with Deakin and Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton. According to these federation boosters, the so-called federation 'Ultras' who resented any equivocation about Federation, much less any opposition to it, George Reid was enemy No. 1.

For the manipulative Sir Henry Parkes in his last years, shocked by Reid's sudden dominance of the contested ground of New South Wales politics in the early 1890s, Reid was a 'babbling lunatic', the 'arch plotter against Federation'; for Edmund Barton, a good friend of Reid's when they were growing up (they were fishing mates), it was Reid who used 'slow poison' on Federation's cause; and for the articulate if vituperative Bernhard Ringrose Wise, a former supporter of Free Trader Reid turned bitter opponent, Reid's 'hostility' to Federation represented the main obstacle to its attainment.[3]

None of these opinions stands up to close scrutiny. However, what becomes obvious almost immediately after the inauguration of the Commonwealth in 1901 was that Reid's cogent, democratic stance in the 1890s (beginning with his stinging criticisms in 1891 of the various undemocratic clauses in the first Federation Bill) ran the risk of being recast as carping – stubbornly oppositionist amidst the fast-growing enthusiasm for the idea of a new nation. Too often history is written by the winners. The 'Ultras' seized the federation narrative and held it tightly for decades.

George Reid was never an 'Ultra'. When Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin, unencumbered by high office or much political responsibility throughout the 1890s, were stumping the country delivering pro-Federation speeches with a paucity of detail, Reid was either asking the difficult federation questions that demanded an answer, or he was leading his prickly, opinionated colony of New South Wales, or both.

He was out in the open with a target on his back.

John Norton, the scandal-mongering editor of Sydney's infamous *Truth* newspaper, dedicated a 77-page publication in 1895 to Reid's supposed unreliability as a colonial politician, labelling him 'Reid the Wriggler'.[4] Some of the mud stuck. More damage occurred when Reid delivered one of the era's most significant speeches in 1898 at the Sydney Town Hall. For the audience, packed to the rafters because the historic first referendum vote on Australian Federation was only a couple of months away, Reid painstakingly considered Federation's merits *and* its demerits. A number of pro-Federation newspapers were alarmed at such guileless objectivity, affixing him with the name, 'Yes–No' Reid. Political opponents made mischievous use of this unfair label for the rest of his life.

Yet the reasons for Reid's fade from community view after his death (in London on 12 September 1918) have more to do with what has taken place since his death than anything that occurred while he was living. Scholarship has not been overtly kind to Reid, the fault for this cutting both ways. He certainly did not help historians wanting to explore the details of his career when, as his only authoritative biographer, Winston McMinn, points out in his 1989 biography, Reid 'left no great mass of papers through which a biographer might sift not only for the facts of his public life but also for something of his personality, private attitudes, faiths and prejudices, loves and friendships'.[5] Reid kept no diary.

Compare this to his primary antagonist Deakin, with his National Library of Australia shelf of notebooks crammed full of diary entries, and thousands upon thousands of pages devoted to subjects ranging from humankind's most prominent spiritual leaders, to the numerous séances he had attended, to the vast number of memorable quotes and aphorisms he had painstakingly accumulated – not to mention his many plays and multitude of poems. Deakin obsessively wrote, collected and preserved.

No such luck with Reid. He kept few letters, adhering to what biographer McMinn refers to as a 'rigid separation … between his public and his private life, his insistence that the latter should be very private indeed …'[6]

Confronted by these obstacles, I am not the first researcher to light upon Reid's autobiography with a sense of relief. *My Reminiscences* he called it, a 400-page door-stopper published in London by Cassell in 1917, the year before he died. This had to be a mother lode of assistance, didn't it? A work full of his distinctive personality quirks, humour and wit – didn't it? The best answer to these questions was given by AB Piddington, a fellow politician and good friend of Reid who produced a pithy response shortly after publication of the *Reminiscences*:

> [George] Reid deserved a biography, but all he got was an autobiography. His life, as he lived it, was full of movement, adventure and surprise; his life, as he wrote it, has only the last [of these] – the surprise being that a mind so lively could write a book so dull.[7]

The profound disappointment of the autobiography for the curious enquirer, compounded by McMinn's decision in his 330-page biography to allocate a mere 12 pages to the first half of Reid's life, makes the task of doing justice to Reid and his times more challenging, and yet more necessary, than it might otherwise have been.

In this essay, I want to contribute to Reid's rehabilitation for a 21st century audience, spending at least as much time on his brash formative years, the character-building years, his early to young adult years, as on the later political years. We should know more about his busy and productive life before he entered the political arena in his mid-30s.

Thus, *five* fundamental questions will be explored: firstly, if the abrasive William Morris Hughes (Australia's controversial seventh Prime Minister and a man not given to excessive praise for anyone) could describe Reid in the 1890s as 'the most democratic Premier' that New South Wales had ever had, what prompted this description, and from such an unlikely source?[8] The answer can be found in Reid's upbringing and his early years, when he was regularly exposed to a group of the colony of New South Wales' most progressive thinkers, movers and shakers. He wanted to find his place among them, and over time he did.

Secondly, in what ways did Reid, the young democrat, the charming ladies' man, the man-about-Sydney-town, show his fellow colonists what proud nationhood might look like? And what cultural role did the sport of cricket play in the process?

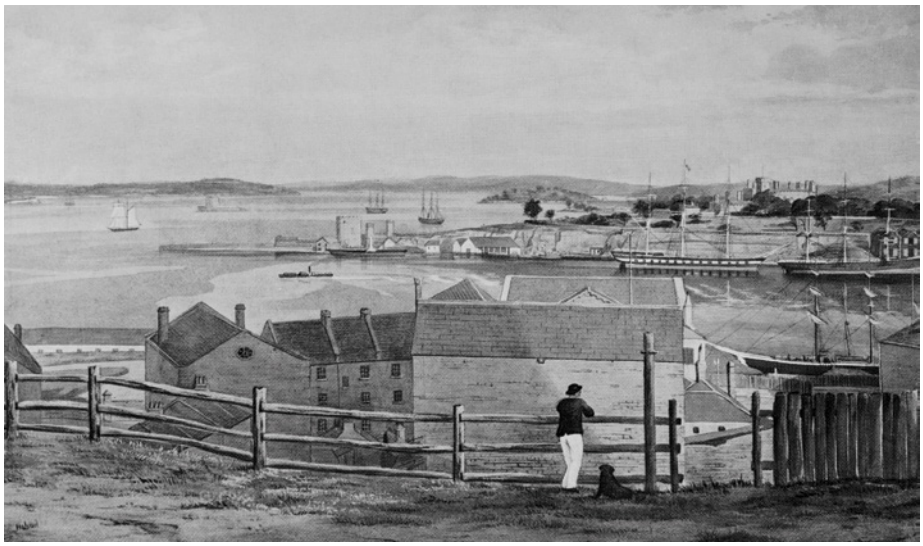
Thirdly, why was the extroverted politician Reid, described by one political contemporary as 'the best platform speaker' in the British Empire, such an uncompromising protector of his private life and that of his family?[9] The answer lies in an accumulation of domestic matters that impacted on Reid and Flora, his lifelong wife and partner, early in their relationship. This vital slice of Reid's private life exerted its most dramatic impact during the 1890s, in political terms the most significant decade of Reid's entire life. Biographer McMinn appears to be unaware of the personal anguish.

Fourthly, in light of the bitter criticisms directed at Reid by a few high-profile federation 'Ultras', what led outstanding federation historian, LF 'Fin' Crisp, to describe him as 'one of the greatest (and, unquestionably, one of the shrewdest)' of all the illustrious 'Federation Founding Fathers'?[10] For McMinn, not surprisingly, Reid was *the* most influential Founding Father.

And finally, why have Reid's manifold achievements in London during the last 10 years of his life, especially the Great War years, received such underwhelming attention from historians, even those concerned with the substance of his legacy?

With Reid, we are confronted by a number of inviting questions that need a response. Some biases against him retain a pervasive currency.

Scotland to Sydney



Sydney Cove, 1853 (top), and 1863 (bottom).

Australia's first two Prime Ministers, Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin, were both born in Australia, 'native-born' in the popular phrase of the era. Our third Prime Minister, John Christian 'Chris' Watson, in the top job for only four months, was born on a boat in Valparaiso harbour, in Chile on the west coast of South America.

George Reid, fourth Prime Minister and the oldest of the early Prime Ministers, was born on 25 February 1845 in Johnstone, on the outskirts of Glasgow, Scotland, the fifth son of Renfrewshire Presbyterian minister, John Reid, and Jean Crybbace, herself the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. The Reids named their fifth-born 'George Houstoun' after his godfather, one of Renfrewshire County's members of parliament.[11]

After the Rev John Reid accepted a position at Oldham Street Presbyterian Church in Liverpool, England, two more children, both daughters, were added to the family. The Reids were never threatened by an involuntary stay in the poorhouse, but it does appear that the unswerving commitment of both of young George's parents to improving the lot of society's downtrodden, and the Rev Reid's poor financial management of the home, were enough to make life on occasion difficult for a big family. As an adult, George had a recurrent childhood memory of 'quite enough porridge' but 'not quite enough treacle'. This of course was just another anecdote he enjoyed telling later in life. We have ample evidence of a doting mother, a 'wonderfully kind' father, and a bunch of brothers and sisters who indulged the infant George, and with whom he remained extremely close for the rest of his life.[12]

The tightness of the expanding family unit must have made the major changes ahead a little easier for all to manage – specifically, the parents' momentous decision in 1852 to immigrate to Melbourne when George was seven, and then move to Sydney in 1858 when he was 13. While it is certain that Reid's father was not recklessly heading to the Australian colonies, like so many of his generation, to try his luck on the rich goldfields of Victoria, the exact reasons for the decision are not clear. John Reid's poor health, a bronchial condition, was one contributor, for which he sought (as his son remembered many years later) 'a more congenial climate in the Southern Hemisphere' with the 'health-bestowing qualities of Australian air'[13]; career prospects in shipping for the family's older sons, another. But it seems that, more than these, it was the attraction of a fresh opportunity in the father's church, to be part of a young community performing Christian good works in a wholly different, sunnier, healthier climate, that probably clinched things.

Despite the obvious appeal for the historian of linking Presbyterian minister Reid's move to Australia in the early 1850s to the overly ambitious immigration project of the Rev John Dunmore Lang at this time, the two appear unrelated. The indomitable Lang – Presbyterian Church leader, republican, land reformer, educationist, historian, poet and outspoken political activist – would add his colourful entry to the Reid story. But not immediately. After stints in churches in Victoria, John Reid eventually took his family to Sydney to become Lang's colleague at Scots Church and moderator of his rebel synod of New South Wales. To the extent that anyone could maintain a working

friendship with the irascible Lang for long, the Rev Reid managed to do so. In 1862, he was appointed as the minister of the Mariners' Church on Lower George Street, a Protestant chapel for seamen which provided the opportunity for the Reid family to live close by in a large home at 115 Princes Street, virtually under what is now the southern end of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was centrally located, comfortable accommodation unlike anything the family had ever experienced in the past. The Rev Reid's appointment proved to be an extremely popular one for the chapel's regular and transient parishioners.

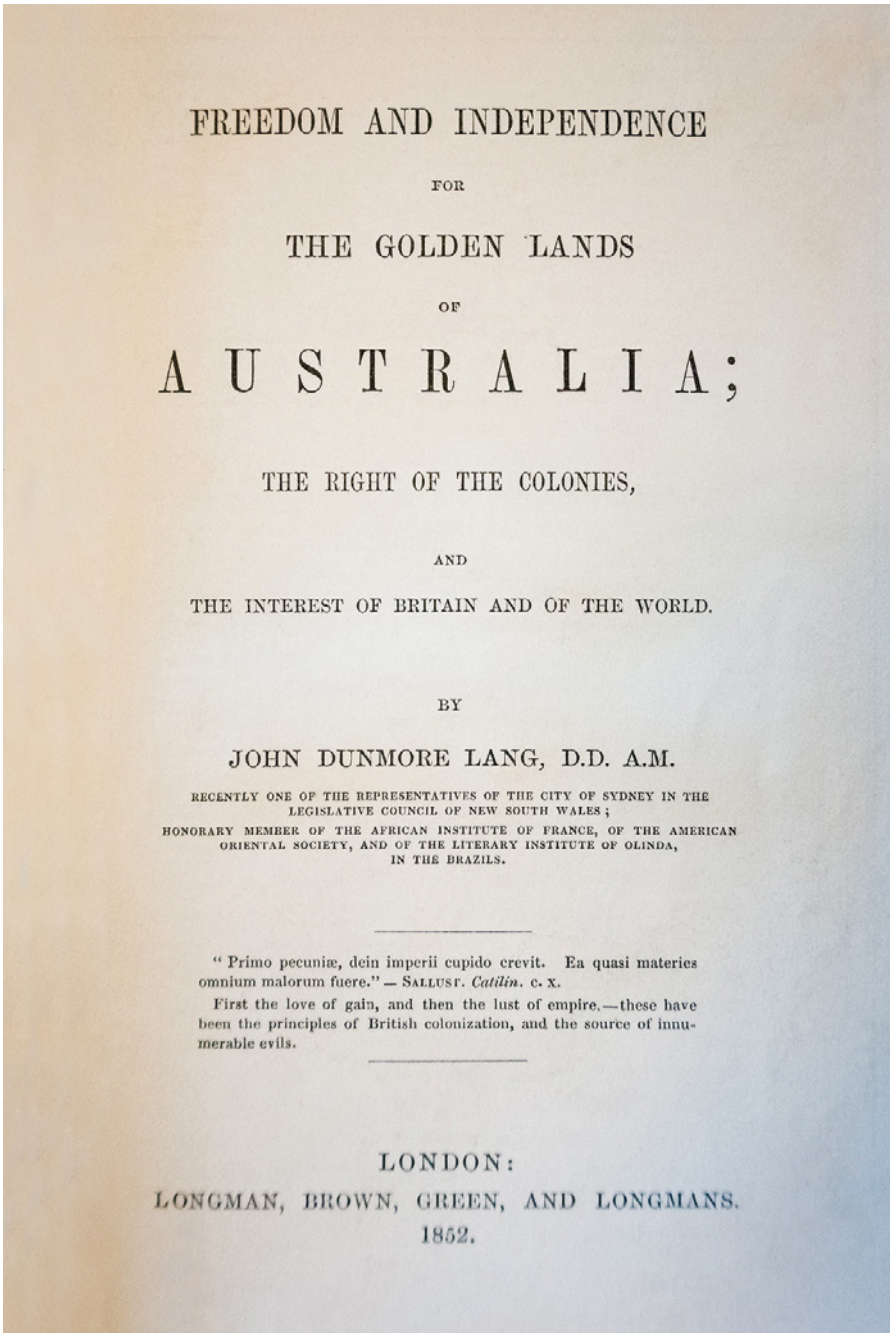
The best measure of young George's barely six years of schooling, all of them in Melbourne at what became Scotch College, is that he looked back on them as a period of little cultural and intellectual stimulation. In a 1904 article he wrote for *Life* magazine, Reid recalled that as 'a school-boy, I was so morbidly sensitive and bashful that when I had to go up before the school, in the presence of my school-fellows, it cost me the keenest suffering'.[14] It is worth noting that neither George Reid, at Scotch College in the later 1850s, nor second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, unhappily attending Melbourne Grammar School in the early 1860s, had any affinity whatsoever for the 'muscular' Christianity practised at English public and Australian private schools. Deakin was never interested in playing up, playing up and playing the game. He was devoted to books, absorbed in the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver and the exotic world of the *Arabian Nights*.[15]

Scotch College (close by Chalmers Church and the Printing Office), Melbourne, 1861. Reid attended the school (initially, the Melbourne Academy) from 1856 to 1862, but he did not like it much.

A selection from Reid's library, part of a gift to Sydney's Powerhouse Museum by the late Anne Fairbairn, Reid's granddaughter.

This book of Reid's, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis (written in Latin in the early 15th century), is a devotional handbook of a spiritual life, the core message being humility.

Reid's copy of *1001 Arabian Nights* (front cover title in Arabic), a favourite of his from childhood, with its abundance of exotic Middle Eastern folk tales featuring the likes of Ali Baba, Aladdin and Sinbad.



FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

FOR

THE GOLDEN LANDS

OF

AUSTRALIA;

THE RIGHT OF THE COLONIES,

AND

THE INTEREST OF BRITAIN AND OF THE WORLD.

BY

JOHN DUNMORE LANG, D.D. A.M.

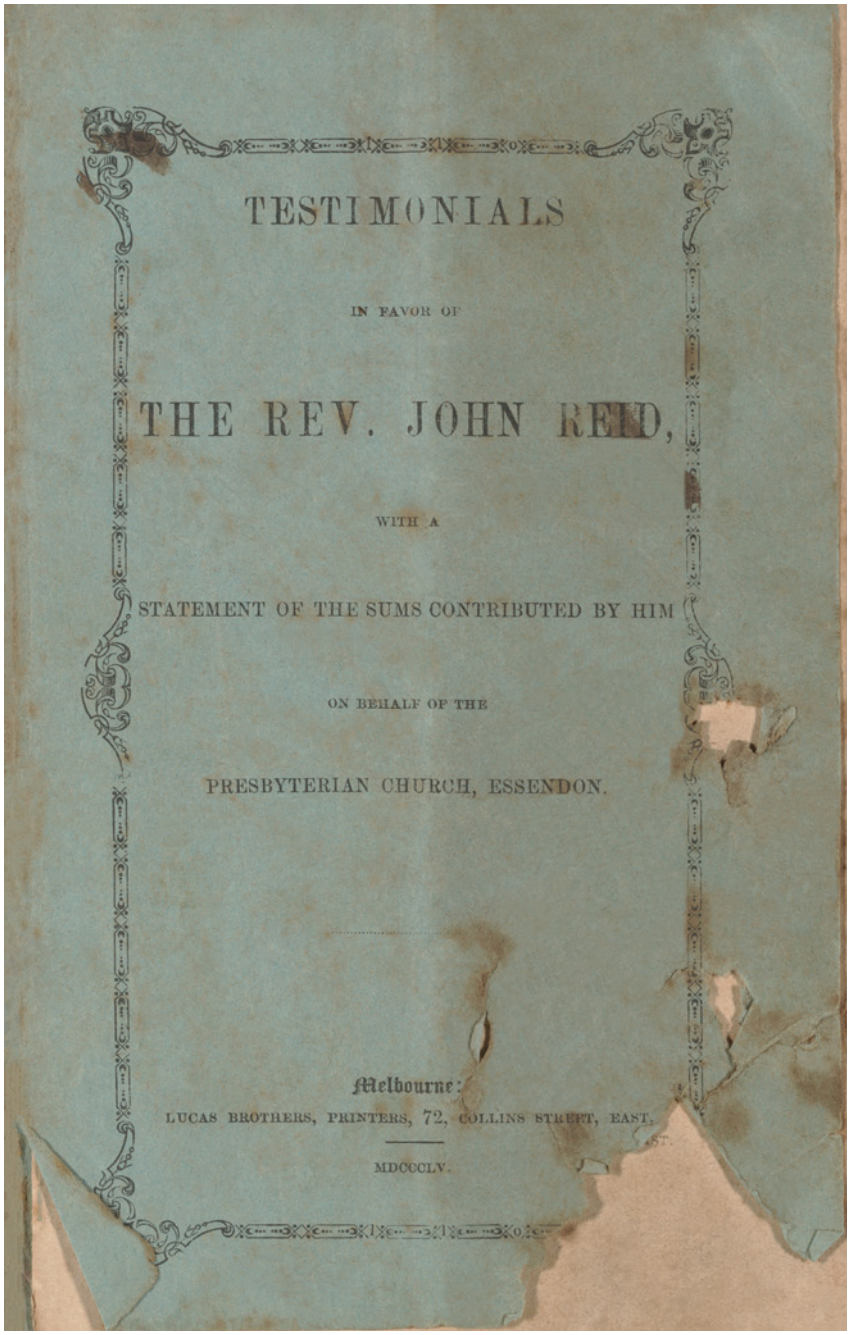
RECENTLY ONE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CITY OF SYDNEY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES;
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF FRANCE, OF THE AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY, AND OF THE LITERARY INSTITUTE OF OLINDA, IN THE BRAZILS.

"Primo pecuniæ, dein imperii cupido crevit. Ea quasi materies omnium malorum fuere." — SALLUST. *Catilin.* c. x.

First the love of gain, and then the lust of empire.—these have been the principles of British colonization, and the source of innumerable evils.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1852.

Rev John Dunmore Lang was one of the NSW colony's most controversial figures. *Freedom and Independence* (1852), his classic republican text, would definitely have been in the Reid household bookshelf as young George grew up.



TESTIMONIALS

IN FAVOR OF

THE REV. JOHN REID,

WITH A

STATEMENT OF THE SUMS CONTRIBUTED BY HIM

ON BEHALF OF THE

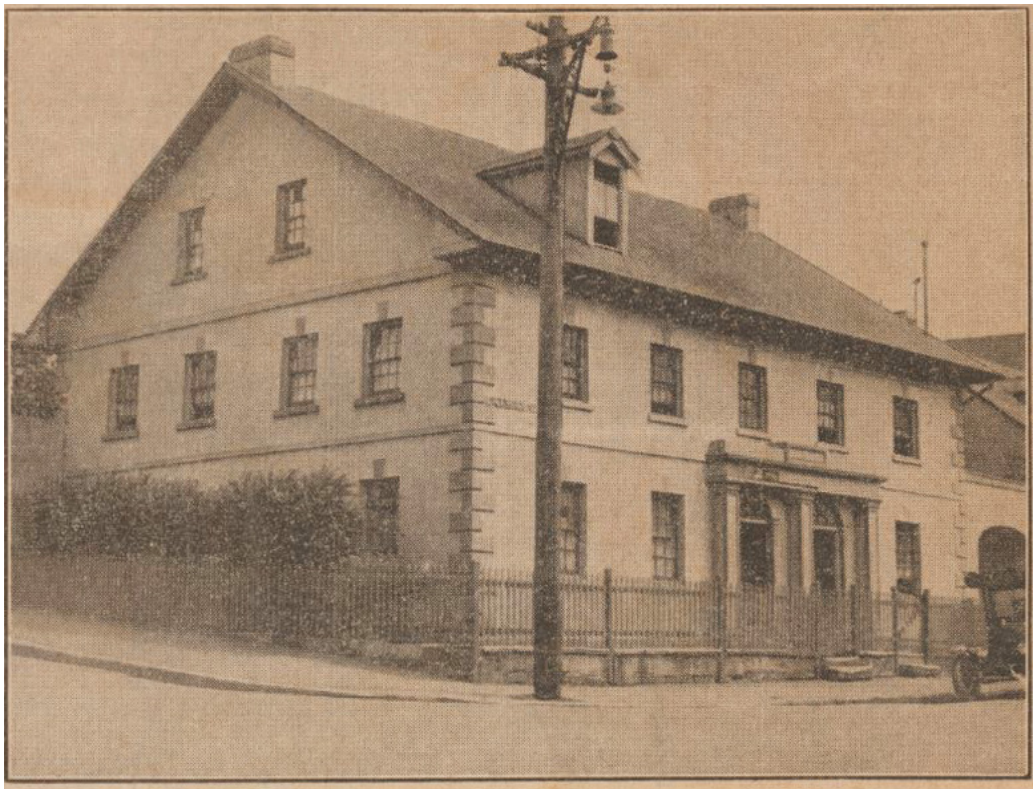
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ESSENDON.

Melbourne:

LUCAS BROTHERS, PRINTERS, 72, COLLINS STREET, EAST.

MDCCCLV.

When Reid's father departed the Presbyterian Church in Moonee Ponds (Essendon) in 1855, the congregation published this emotional collection of testimonials to their minister's inspiring religious and community leadership.



NO. 115 PRINCES-STREET, IN WHICH "PARSON" REID, FATHER OF SIR GEORGE REID, RESIDED.

When the Rev John Reid accepted the position as chaplain of the Mariners' Church in Sydney in 1862 the Reid family moved into 115 Princes Street in the Rocks area, easily the biggest home they had ever lived in. Unfortunately, it was one of many buildings demolished to make way for the Sydney Harbour Bridge development.

Reid too rejected the *Tom Brown's Schooldays* conditioning of Scotch, preferring to satisfy his appetite for alternative learning elsewhere. Once in Sydney and barely into his teens, he left school and got a job as a junior clerk at a merchant's counting house. It might sound a little Dickensian but it was not. Reid had begun life's journey, drawing his substantive education from two disparate yet fertile sources. His place of birth for one, what his granddaughter Anne Fairbairn has referred to as his 'intense pride in his Scottish background'.[16] Even though an infant when he left Scotland, the land of thistle and heather would forever have a treasured place in Reid's imagination, whether through the satisfaction he derived from being linked to Puritan ancestors on his father's side, his dubious links to the almost mythic Robbie Burns on his mother's side, or his entrenched belief in the inherent superiority of the progressive Scottish education system.[17]

From the time Reid entered politics in 1880 he acted on the belief that every child had a right to a sound education. It was a theme he returned to often, throughout his decades in politics and for many years afterwards when he found himself the honoured guest speaker at an endless round of public occasions arranged by Scottish organisations in Australia, England and Scotland. When the Royal Scottish Geographical Society invited Reid to give lectures in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1912 he chose as his topic, 'The World of Matter and the World of the Mind'. In the talk he applauded the fact that Scottish children had, for several hundred years, received the benefit of 'the rudiments of a sound education', and this had played its part in establishing greater equality among the classes: 'The rising generations of Scotia have been nourished in a mental as well as a physical atmosphere'.[18]

The second and more influential source of what Reid called his 'real' education was the progressive Australian community in which he grew up, and the era he was fortunate enough to inhabit at the time: rowdy, energetic Sydney in the 1860s and 1870s. School in Melbourne, Reid once said, had no 'triumphs' at all for him. It was 'wonderfully unenlightened'.[19] By contrast, life in Sydney in the 1860s and '70s, when he was in his teens and twenties, offered endless stimulation.

In the workplace, Reid's advancement was rapid. He was very good with figures and their macro-application to a rapidly expanding colonial economy. Modest counting-house beginnings led to appointment, aged 19 in 1864, as an Assistant Accountant in the Colonial Treasury on a salary of £200, good money at the time; a few years later he was Clerk of Correspondence and Contracts on a handsome £400, very good money; then Chief Clerk of Correspondence within Treasury as a 28-year-old in the early 1870s; and finally promotion to Secretary to the Crown Law Offices in the Attorney-General's Department, in 1878 aged 33, a position he occupied just before he decided to throw his hat into the political ring.[20]

Such impressive career mobility was driven by Reid's own set of personal ambitions, initially fuelled in the home, around the family dinner table, and observing his father at work in his church. 'My father', Reid recalled, was 'a very eloquent man' whose sermons and conversation provided 'intellectual nourishment' that was 'incalculable'. The Rev John Reid died when George was 22, but not before he had become his son's role model in life, his fixed moral compass. Reid expressed his debt with simplicity. 'Father', he wrote, was 'a beautiful example of a Christian man – lovable, level-minded, and tolerant, living out his faith'.[21]

When Reid produced his own first essay, as a 15-year-old, it was aptly entitled 'Hope'.[22] His next effort could easily have been called 'Aspirations', for there were a number of organisations springing up in the inner part of Sydney at the time which encouraged the colony's talented youth to excel. Reid was a prominent member of this upwardly mobile group. Despite his attempts later in life to portray himself as excessively wayward when young, partial to life's pleasures, in fact he eagerly embraced the various cultural opportunities available. He joined the Sydney Literary Association as its youngest member by far, took an active part in the Presbyterian Men's Union and, about 1860 while still in his mid-teens, became a leading member of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, the colony's 'leading institution of self-education'. Reid thrived in the boisterous atmosphere of a range of clubs he later described as 'a splendid sort of mental gymnasium'.[23] These clubs, together with his father's progressive ministry at the Mariners' Church, brought young George into contact with a number of Sydney's sharpest political minds. Discussion of topical issues, controversial issues, was standard fare.

Reid was favoured by personal circumstances. At his father's church he regularly mixed with a cross-section of the noble, older reformers prominent in the 1830s, '40s and '50s – remarkable individuals including the republican Rev Lang; Samuel Deane Gordon, a respected member of the Legislative Council; the Rev Barzillai Quaife, one of the leader-writers for the Henry Parkes-edited *Empire* newspaper in the turbulent 1850s decade and, later, Reid's tutor for five years, mentoring him through courses in mental philosophy, psychology and logic; Dr William Bland, benefactor of liberal causes, scholar and man of science; and Richard Sadleir, activist, politician, philanthropist and advocate for Aboriginal rights, a hundred years ahead of his time.[24] Such men helped to reshape and remodel New South Wales from a penal settlement, an infamous 'sink of wickedness', into a thriving colony with a bright future. They also helped to mould the young George's evolving political beliefs and assumptions. Principles of democracy and fairness were inculcated. The compassion of his parents and their wide circle of friends rubbed off.

We know that Reid attended many political meetings as a youngster, and it was at these entertaining, open-air gatherings that he received what he recalled as his 'first impressions of the unbridled eloquence of which political reformers are capable, and the gloomy forebodings which haunt the imaginations of some of their Conservative opponents'.[25] Reform as a prerequisite for social progress solidified as a core Reid belief as he (and his colony) moved excitedly into the watershed 1870s decade.

Reid had concluded the first part of his political apprenticeship. What he called his colony's 'gold fever' had subsided, and the issue of land ownership (with vast tracks of New South Wales locked up in the hands of a small number of wealthy pastoralists) was on everyone's lips. Sir John Robertson, a 'champion' of the 'people's cause', had introduced the Robertson Land Acts in 1860–61 with the aim of stopping these land owners from becoming wealthier.[26] The Acts failed to achieve their goal but the debate broadened into the bigger issue of what Reid called the 'transfer of political power from the classes to the masses'.[27] Social and economic inequality had to be addressed by government. Reid spent the 1870s preparing himself, educating himself, to play a part in this momentous shift in the nature and meaningful application of political power.

The stamp of the young democrat

Reid, early 1880s, fashionably attired to enjoy Sydney's numerous entertainments.

The significance of the 1870s decade as a transformative period in Australian colonial society cannot be overstated. Transportation of convicts to New South Wales had effectively stopped in 1840, but the last convicts sent to Australian shores were landed in Western Australia as late as 1868. The grim past weighed heavily on the antipodean imagination. As all colonies basked in the glow of the 'long boom' produced by gold, wool and ever-expanding trade, convictism remained stuck in the community's throat. Social and cultural commentators began to consider the impact of the dark antipodean past on the present and future. Would the first free-born Australian generations be affected by the criminal past? Would the sins of the fathers and mothers be visited on their sons and daughters, and the generations that followed? Questions about an emergent 'Australian' identity were raised and prospects for a future nation vigorously discussed, by the native-born and transplanted population inevitably, and also by a succession of prominent English visitors.

As new nation-states popped up all over the world, speculation in Australia about an Australian 'national type' took hold.[28] Renowned English novelist and travel writer, Anthony Trollope, offered one opinion when, in his much-discussed work, *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), he identified considerable 'self-adulation' amongst young Australians. He accused them of being 'blowers', over-confident boasters.[29] Sir Redmond Barry, judge at the Ned Kelly trial and one of Melbourne's leading citizens, had a more measured approach when setting up an enquiry into whether 'the [British] race in its transplantation to Australian soil retains undiminished the vigour and fire and stamina of the strong old stock of which it is an offshoot'.[30]

While the Australian community began to take positions on both sides of the debate, one theme kept recurring in discussion: what James Hogan identified in his contribution to the *Victorian* Review in November 1880 as the typical Australian male's 'inordinate love of field sports'.[31] Sport in the 1870s changed the game. At the beginning of the decade, a pall of hesitation and humility characterised colonial behaviour. However, a mere 10 years later a radical change had occurred. For much of the nineteenth century, heroic, triumphalist Empire literature had trumpeted the importance of sport, especially the gentleman's game of cricket, in providing a young Britisher with a suitably well-rounded education – sport's capacity to produce warriors, leaders of men. After all, wasn't it the Iron Duke himself who said that 'the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton'?

Australian colonists pre-1870 were content with the apparent rightness of these sentiments. But what happens when the bastard race in the southern colonies, those unfortunates relegated to the remote geographical periphery, begin to produce sporting champions? Australia's sculling champion Edward 'Ned' Trickett went to the rowing course on the Thames at Putney in 1876 and returned home with the world rowing title, greeted in Sydney harbour by a crowd of over 25,000 people.

The cricketers made an even more compelling statement.

Their results dismantled the stability of Britain's Empire assumptions. In 1877 an Australian XI beat a high-quality English XI in Australia in a match regarded as the first-ever Test. Then, in the European summer of 1878, an Australian XI defeated a star-studded MCC XI, according to Wisden 'one of the strongest MCC XIs ever put out by the famous club', including the legendary WG Grace himself, at the hallowed Lords ground, the home of cricket.[32] Australian fast bowlers, Fred 'the Demon' Spofforth and former Bendigo gold miner, Harry Boyle, terrorised their opponents. WG Grace was the 'Demon's' bunny. Colonial sport journalists shook with excitement, and Australia's future fourth Prime Minister with them. The status quo had been flipped on its head. George Reid's belief in his community's attractive future, and democracy's credentials to deliver that future, were confirmed in these years.

Reid himself was not particularly flash at cricket, but he loved the game and he knew how important it was for his countrymen, the symbolic role it could play in what he termed 'the advance of Australia'.[33] In the first half of his life this home-grown catchphrase came to dominate his thinking, his writings and, as we will see, his actions as well.

Aged 21 in 1866, Reid was appointed as a delegate to the fledgling New South Wales Cricket Association (NSWCA), and in 1875 he was made its treasurer. This was the same year that acclaimed Australian novelist Marcus Clarke wrote that 'in a new country … there are opportunities for fresh and vigorous delineation of human character'.[34] The words might well have been Reid's own. He wanted to be an agent for change and during the 1870s he went about it in several ways that underscored his determination to see cultural development in the colonies occur, along with political and social development. Reid studied for a law degree and, admitted to the Bar in 1879, he developed into a brilliant cross-examiner, in time the colony's most feared. He began to move in influential circles, in particular as a regular attendee at prominent businessman Thomas Sutcliffe Mort's political salons held at his plush Darling Point residence, 'Greenoaks', usually at 'open house' on a Sunday afternoon. Reid later paid tribute to these occasions, the next stage in his apprenticeship, as his 'first successful steps in politics, for not only was the exchange of ideas invigorating but there [I] met most of the people on whose influence [I] leant'.[35] Thomas Mort felt that Reid had the ability to become the colony's Premier, and Mort resided in the heart of the affluent suburbs in eastern Sydney that Reid would shortly represent. Mort had clout.[36]

Rubbing shoulders with men of power and influence resulted in a few curious changes in Reid at this time. He was getting older, a little more conscious of his public posture, and he could be a bit of a show-off. So he began using notepaper

with a 'GHR' monogram, he joined a masonic lodge to get on (maintaining the connection for the rest of his life), he started using a monocle to the delight, later on, of Australia's army of cartoonists, and he settled on his own Latin motto. Translated, the motto suggested that one should be 'prepared for any eventuality'.[37] Reid was partial to the odd affectation to promote himself as a well-dressed, go-ahead, man about Sydney town.

But to be fair, he was at the same time planning carefully for a career that could make a difference in advancing his colony. This proactivity is evident in an eclectic assortment of writings he produced in the 1870s decade. The two most important of these were his *Five Free Trade Essays*, published in 1875, and *New South Wales – the Mother Colony of the Australias*, published in 1878, both volumes of effective propaganda, and both statements of political intent.[38] They were essential items in the rapidly expanding Reid CV.

It is impossible to do justice here to Reid's cluster of cultural contributions. Enough to say that, taken as a whole, they created quite a stir across Australia and internationally, for a few reasons. The *Free Trade* volume, a concise assessment of the shortcomings of tariff protection in Great Britain, the United States and Australia, was produced by Reid to challenge the majority support for protection of industry in the neighbouring, gold-rich colony of Victoria. Reid was also quietly preparing himself to take on Henry Parkes, the dominant figure in New South Wales politics, an advocate of Free Trade though someone with little real interest in either its theoretical rationale or practical implementation. Parkes was always concerned mainly with Parkes. Five times his colony's Premier and three times a bankrupt, some felt he changed his policies and beliefs with every change of clothes. Parkes and Reid would eventually engage in a dramatic confrontation over free trade leadership, but that was still 15 years away.

In the last pages of the *Free Trade* volume Reid summed up his fiscal vision, emphasising Free Trade's capacity not only to make the Australian colonies more prosperous but fairer:

> We fervently trust that so mischievous a barrier to the union of the Australian Colonies as Protection will soon be broken down; and that the genius of commercial liberty will speedily emerge … diffusing her equal blessings over our scattered populations, [binding them] as closely in the relations of free trade and goodwill as they already are bound by the ties of kindred blood, and the promise of a grand future.[39]

Reid later conceded that *Five Free Trade Essays* was a little too cocky, but it was enough to secure him honorary membership of England's prestigious Cobden Club and he did receive a personal letter from William Gladstone, dated 13 July 1875,

congratulating him on a valuable contribution to the global debate and inviting the Australian to make use of his letter as may serve the best interests of Free Trade in Britain's southern colonies.

Reid was destined to become the leader of the free trade politicians in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly (and after that in the Commonwealth Parliament). He firmly believed that, once effectively implemented, Free Trade would produce a more equal society. Once he began his political career, it was the policy for which he would fight over the next 30 years.

Reid's other major publication in the 1870s decade, an engaging account of his home colony, the 'Mother Colony of NSW', was published in Sydney, London and New York. It gave him the opportunity to promote to a global audience virtually all of the subjects of importance to him, and to highlight those individuals who stood out, in another popular phrase of the time, as Australia's 'Coming Men'. Inspired by the extraordinary impact of Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exposition, Reid was determined to 'offer to the world a view [of New South Wales'] advantages, condition and prospects, more comprehensive than has yet been presented'.[40]

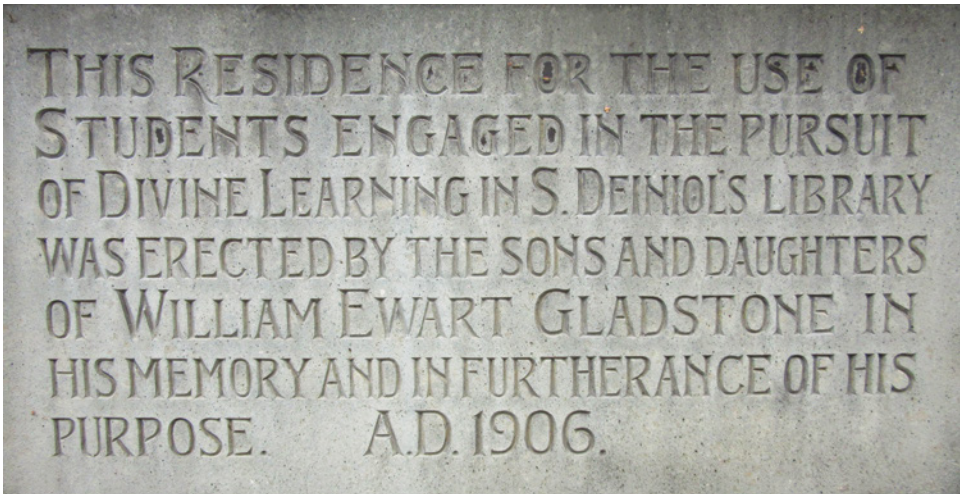
If the number of glowing international reviews of the essay is any guide, then the ambitious Reid succeeded spectacularly. The volume's popularity contributed to its author's preparation for a political career. He introduced a vast audience to what he regarded as his colony's, and indeed 'young' Australia's, unmatched climate, higher form of democracy, capable citizenry and 'remarkable' political progress.[41] Aged 33, Reid had matured; in the process he had become as 'native-born' as the staunchest of the 'native-born':

> There is no sky clearer by day or more brilliant at night than the Australian. Fine specimens of manhood are to be met with in every district. The endurance, pluck, and activity of Australian bushmen are proverbial. All the sports of old England flourish, especially cricket and rowing. Trickett, who recently won the sculling Championship of the Thames, was born and bred near Sydney.[42]

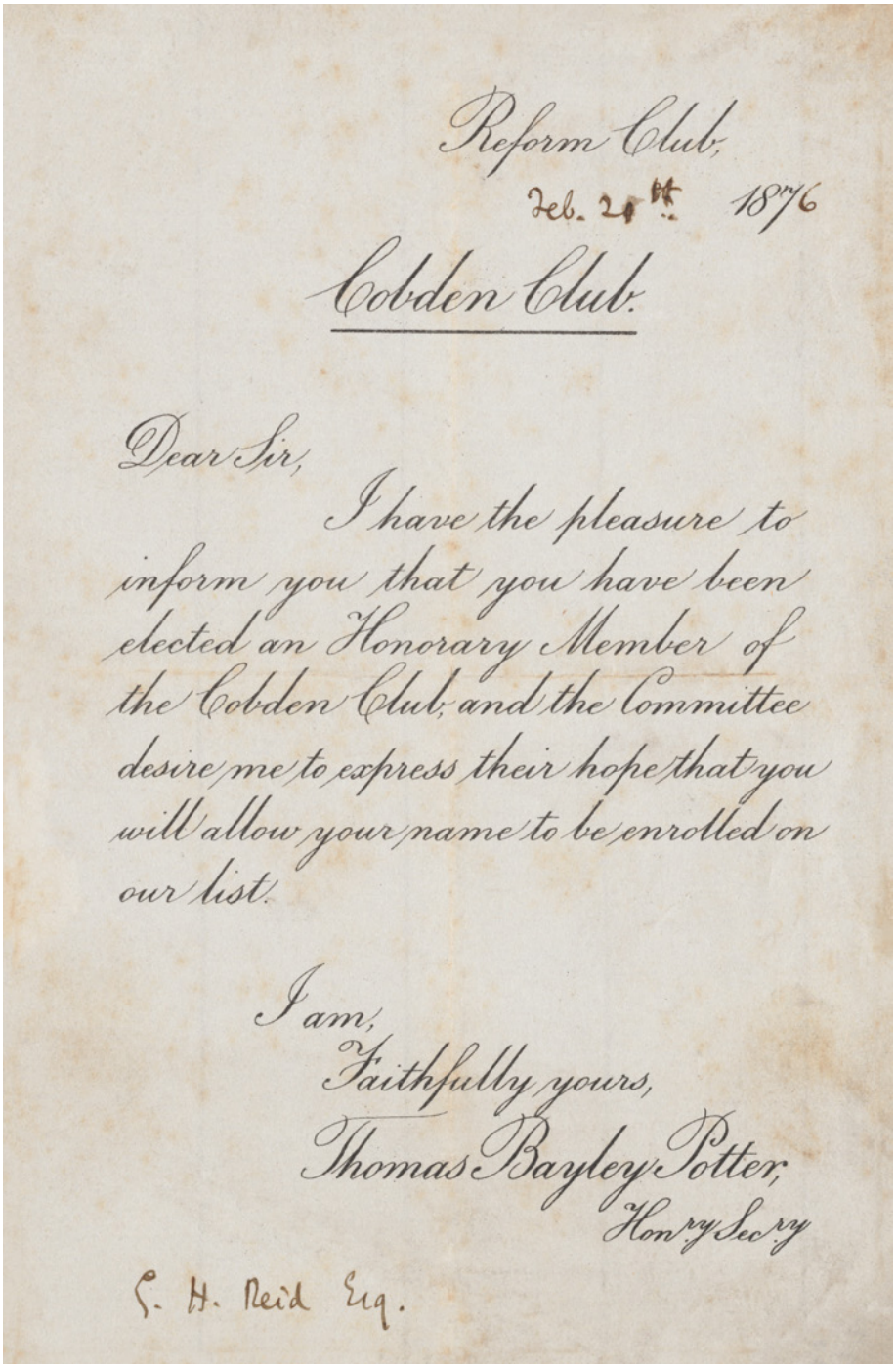
It is important, however, that we measure such effusive sentiments against the volume's final sentence, where Reid states that if New South Wales can 'emulate the virtues of the British character, [it] may soon become the Queen of the South, with none to dispute her right to wear her crown'.[43] Like so many colonists, Reid had dual loyalties, to colony and to Empire. While he was about to navigate the clash of these loyalties in the public arena, there is little doubt that the older he got the more easily they existed comfortably for him, in his speeches and writings.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, c. 1850s. Young George was an enthusiastic participant in the School's broad range of educational and cultural activities, particularly those programs which encouraged public speaking.

The original entry gate to Sydney's extraordinary 1879–80 International Exhibition, which can still be viewed on Macquarie Street today. An exuberant Reid wrote a long poem in praise of the Exhibition and his 'Mother Colony' which was subsequently published. However, like his political rival, Henry Parkes, he was no poet.



Statue of William Ewart Gladstone, the 'Grand Old Man', four times Great Britain's Prime Minister. The monument, in Hawarden village, Flintshire (Wales), is a stone's throw from the gates of Hawarden Castle, Gladstone's stately residence. The final home of Gladstone's vast library, St Deiniol's Library residence, is also close by.



Reform Club,
Feb. 24th 1876

Cobden Club.

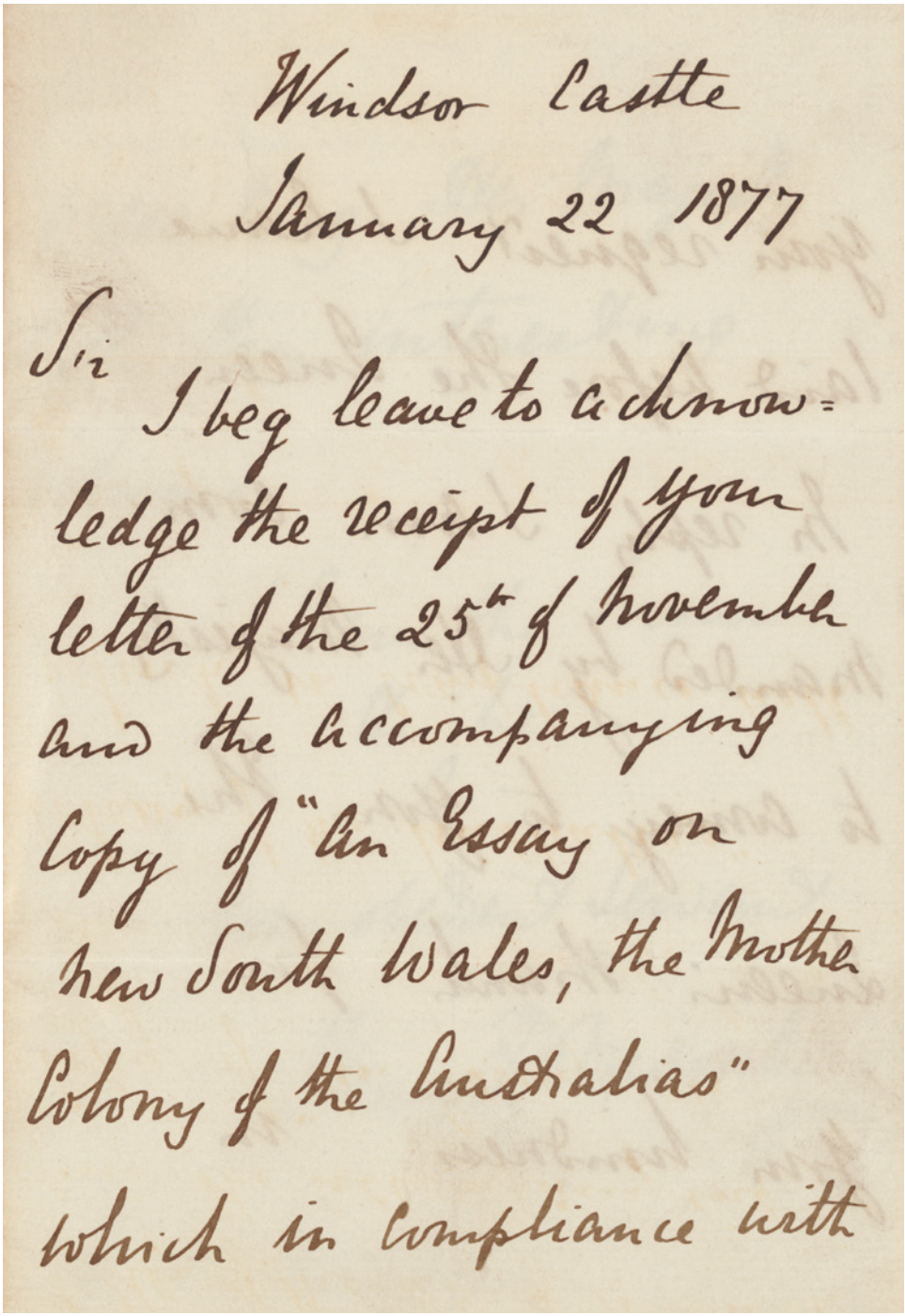
Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to inform you that you have been elected an Honorary Member of the Cobden Club, and the Committee desire me to express their hope that you will allow your name to be enrolled on our list.

I am,
Faithfully yours,
Thomas Bayley Potter,
Hon^ry Sec^ry

C. H. Reid Esq.

Aged 30, Reid published his *Five Free Trade Essays*, a carefully argued volume which gained international publicity. His honorary membership of the prestigious Cobden Club in England was a bonus.



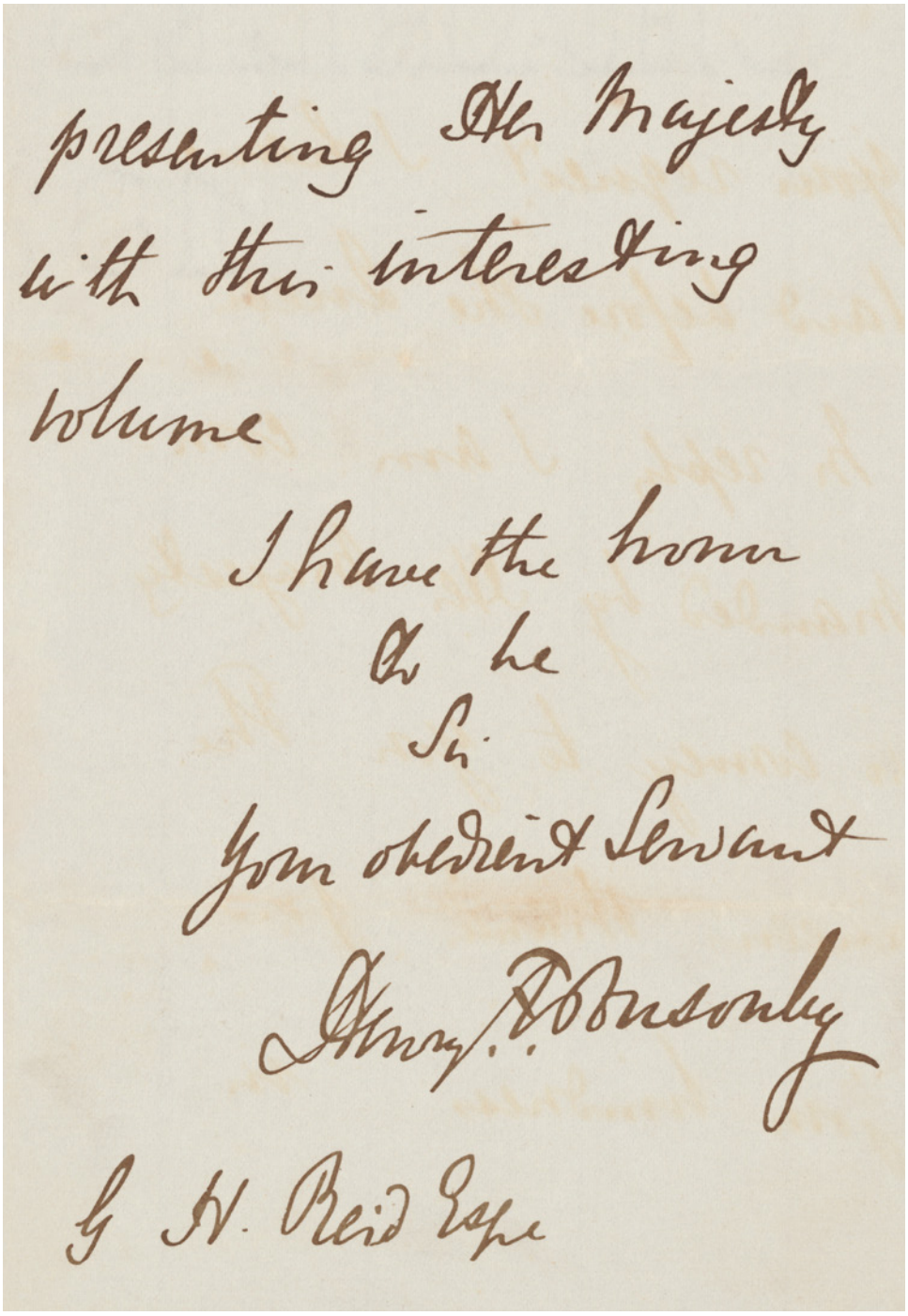
Windsor Castle
January 22 1877

Sir
I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th of November and the accompanying copy of "An Essay on New South Wales, the Mother Colony of the Australias" which in compliance with

Reid never lacked confidence in his own ability. His NSW Essay was boldly fast-tracked to Queen Victoria, while his *Five Free Trade Essays* was sent to William Gladstone.

your request I have
laid before The Queen.

In reply I am com=
manded by Her Majesty
to convey to you The
Queen's thanks for
your kindness in


presenting Her Majesty
with this interesting
volume
I have the honor
to be
Sir
Your obedient Servant
Henry D'Arcy Boulton
G. W. Reid Esqr

23, Carlton House-Terrace,
S.W.

July 13. 75

Dear Sir

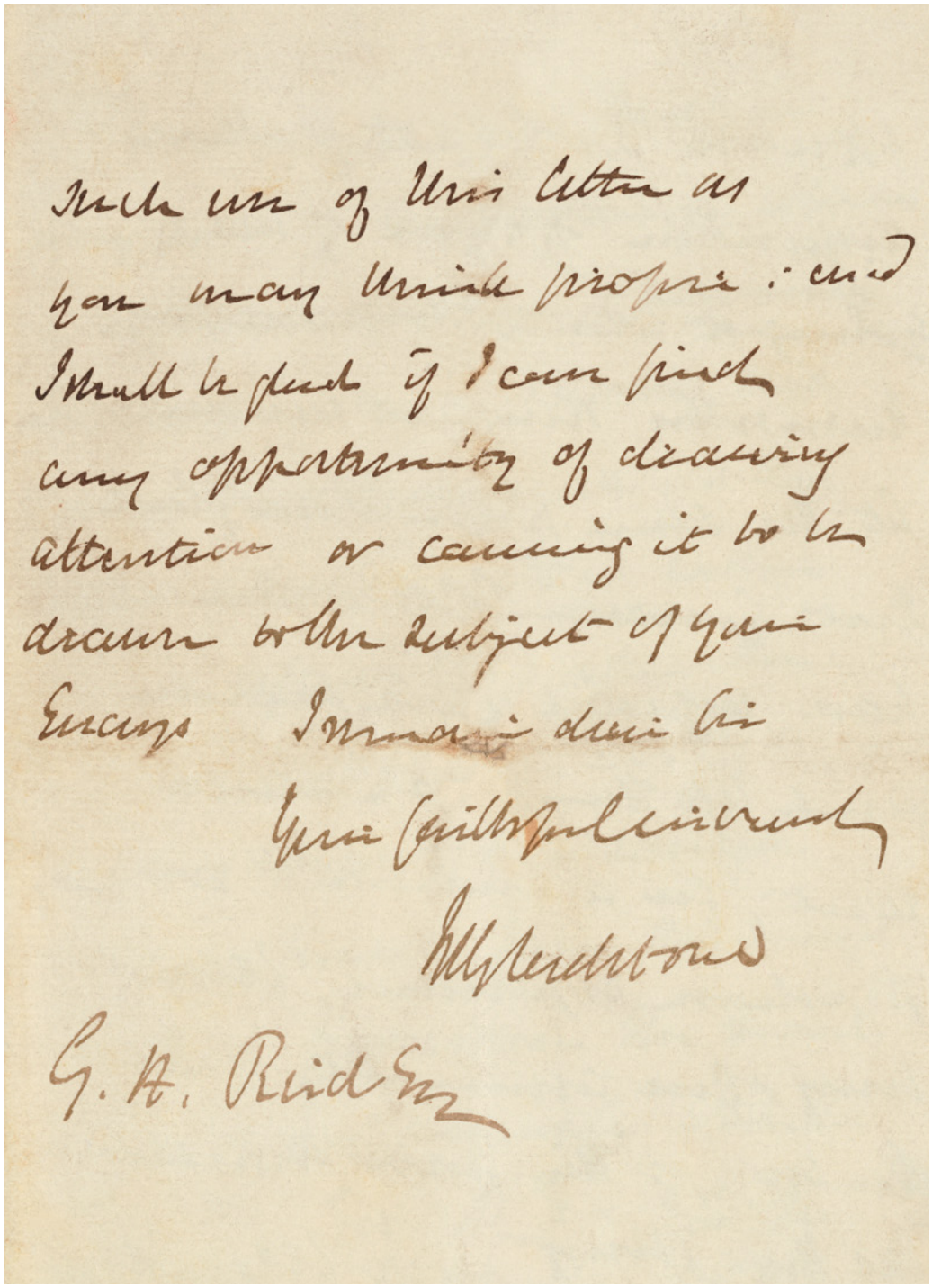
I have to acknowledge the arrival of your letter of May 12 and of the accompanying Essays on Free Trade.

It gives me cordial pleasure to learn from you that the public sentiment of New South Wales is thoroughly favorable to freedom of commerce.

I cannot but hope that, in
any part of Cumberland where
a different sentiment prevails
that people may shortly dis-
cover that they were in the
wrong direction. It is rather
sad to reflect that after the
mother country has with so
much difficulty and struggle
relieved herself from the mis-
chiefs of protection the moral
weight of her example, which
has been powerful in Europe,
should not have been more

effective in checking the
disposition of some of his
youngest colonies to create for
themselves similar mischiefs.
At the same time I am pleased
that Governments at home
have respected their freedom
and left them, with whatever
upset, in a condition to
purchase experience, like
every other commodity, in
the best or the worst markets
as they please.

You are at liberty to make



such use of this letter as
you may think proper: and
I shall be glad if I can find
any opportunity of drawing
attention or causing it to be
drawn to the subject of your
Essays I remain dear Sir
Yours faithfully & sincerely
W. E. Gladstone
G. A. Reid Esq

The two years that followed the publication of the New South Wales *Essay*, 1879 and 1880, were as eventful as any period in Reid's life. There were career advancements: he was admitted to the Bar on 19 September 1879; he took part in, and won, a heavily publicised Sydney Town Hall debate on 27 February 1880 with lawyer and politician David Buchanan, the colony's fiercest advocate of tariff protection; and in November 1880 he nominated in the forthcoming New South Wales Legislative Assembly election for the seat of East Sydney, a seat he would hold (with one brief hiatus) for 20 years until his shift into the federal sphere.

But something else happened at this time. A cricket match. And not just any cricket match – rather, the most controversial game to take place in the Australian colonies in the whole of the nineteenth century. It caused George Reid's hitherto segregated worlds to collide: brash loyalty to his Australian home and attachment to his British background. What happened, precisely, to have Sydney and Melbourne in uproar, London appalled, and not one but two future Australian Prime Ministers actively involved in a spectacle that became known as the 'Sydney Riot'?

Let me summarise. The dashing performance of the Australian cricketers in 1877 and 1878, in Australia and England, was the catalyst for a tour of the colonies in the first months of 1879 by an English XI of amateurs (well, amateurs plus two professionals to do all the bowling). The English side was led by the pucker, opinionated 28-year-old George Robert Canning Harris, the fourth Lord Harris, Eton- and Oxford-educated. According to historian Geoffrey Bolton, Harris 'epitomised the tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority which distinguished the gentleman amateur'.[44] The English team had gone sufficiently poorly on the first leg of their tour, in Victoria, that when they came to Sydney to play an outstanding New South Wales team at the Association's Moore Park ground (later the Sydney Cricket Ground) on 7–10 February 1879, they were underdogs. The many partisan locals who loved a wager plunged heavily on the home team.

However, Harris' squad went rather better than expected and, when star New South Wales and Australian batsman Billy Murdoch was adjudged 'run out' by one of the umpires, a young man called George Coulthard – brought up from the southern colony of Victoria and hand-picked by Lord Harris – three separate pitch invasions occurred. One member of the visiting team was heard to remark that such unseemly crowd behaviour was all you could expect from the 'sons of convicts'. New South Wales Cricket Association President, Sir George Innes, issued an apology to Lord Harris for the embarrassing spectacle, 'a most humble apology' we are told, which was 'graciously' accepted.[45]

But one may smile and smile and be a villain.

The smiling Lord Harris then provided an extended account of the match for the London *Daily Telegraph*, excerpts of which ended up in all the Fleet Street papers. He wrote home that his cricketers had been subjected to 'horror' and 'insult' by a 'larrikin' colonial crowd that became a 'howling mob', adding that some members of the local Cricket Association had 'aided and abetted the bookmakers'.[46]

On the Saturday, the day of the pitch invasions, the composed presence of the umpire at the other end, Edmund Barton, to become Australia's first Prime Minister, helped to calm combustible tempers. Within months, Barton had finessed the publicity he received into a career in politics.

George Reid assumed a completely different role, and a little of the back story is required to appreciate it. The chronology is important. By the late 1870s, Reid had emerged as one of the New South Wales Cricket Association's most respected administrators, despite being one of its youngest members. So when the triumphant Australian cricketers returned from England in 1878, it was Reid who seconded an Association motion of congratulations. In doing so, he placed the cricketers' feats intentionally within the ongoing debate about the emergent 'national type' preoccupying his community. The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 October 1878 reported Reid's words verbatim:

> The beneficial effect of the Anglo–Australian team in England [cannot] be over-estimated, as it [has] tended to show that the national characteristics of the parent stock [have] not degenerated when transported to the Southern Hemisphere.[47]

After the 'Sydney Riot' match, the English team returned to Victoria for another game against a high-quality local XI. Again, controversy. As the match played out it appeared inevitable that the English team would win, prompting Lord Harris and the Victorian captain, Harry Boyle (one of the heroes in the Lords Test of 1878), to agree on an extra 30 minutes to obtain a result. England only needed 54 runs for victory. All of a sudden, in the chase, the visitors were 3–15. Their aristocrat skipper bolted onto the field and, according to the *Evening News*, 'demanded that stumps be drawn' immediately.[48] Under pressure to play on, as agreed, Lord Harris refused to budge, claiming that his men had to freshen up for a banquet in the evening. He got his way and stumps were eventually drawn.

The Victorian captain Boyle was disgusted and let his sentiments be known. His team had already experienced some onfield behaviour from the English captain which Boyle deemed to be contrary to the spirit of the game. When the Victorian second innings was going along well and the great Aboriginal batsman Johnny Mullagh was belting the English bowlers to all parts of the ground, according to the Melbourne *Argus* the English captain in panic instructed his bowlers to send down 'underhand grubbers', mully grubbers, and he stacked the offside to further restrict the scoring.[49] In protest against Harris' actions, on the field and in the pavilion, several members of the Victorian side, including skipper Harry Boyle, boycotted the evening's festivities.

At the banquet Lord Harris acted as if oblivious to what had taken place earlier in the day, instead expressing his distress at 'the unseemly riot' that had recently taken place in Sydney, when his team had been treated, he alleged, with 'questionable courtesy' as if 'they were strolling actors, rather than … a party of gentlemen'. He took exception to the fact that a writer in both the Sydney and Victorian papers had subsequently accused him, Harris, of using 'his elbows … to disperse the crowd' and producing an umpire for the match who was demonstrably incompetent.[50] He named the offending writer: Reid of Sydney. George Reid.

What ensued was a very public altercation between the English Lord and the proud Sydney civil servant that lit up the local dailies. Reid made sure that he sent his account of the Sydney game back to England. While he did not believe that Lord Harris' version of events was 'wilful representation', in June when the New South Wales Cricket Association passed a resolution deploring Harris' unbecoming behaviour, Reid seconded it with what was reported as a 'rousing knockabout speech'.[51] To the hilarity of his appreciative audience, he dismissed the Englishman as a spoilt child and declared that he for one was sick of being 'at the mercy' of such 'superficial and supercilious tourists'.[52]

Less than 18 months later George Reid was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, the new member for the blue ribbon seat of East Sydney. He now had a 'rousing' public profile and he set about using it, though he never lost sight of sport's importance in the advancement of 'young Australia'. Indeed, when he was asked to write a preface for a book by Gordon Inglis, entitled *Sport and Pastime in Australia*, published in London in 1912, he declared that:

Properly regulated sport is a healthy feature of national life. The true sportsman learns to obey, to exercise self-control, to subordinate self-interest. He is none the less, rather the more, a good citizen when he recognises that the proper exercise of the body is essential to the proper working of the mind.[53]

Into the bearpit

Reid in the 1880s, in barrister's rig. He soon became one of Sydney's most respected lawyers.

Historian MH Ellis has written of the shock to the system that new Assembly members could expect 'in the midst of the half-inebriated brawl which was called politics in Sydney in the 1880s'.[54] While Reid was prepared for the bear pit, he made it known that he entered politics with a belief in the politician's golden opportunity to solve nothing less than society's most pressing problems. On the day that Ned Kelly was hanged in Melbourne, and just before his election, Reid took out columns of space in the mainstream *Sydney Morning Herald* to outline what he stood for: defence of free trade policy, which he called 'the glory of New South Wales'; the need for a robust and fair public school system, provided in an 'atmosphere of religious toleration'; a free public library in Sydney with 'halls for evening lectures for young men in the employed classes of the community'; and an equitable system for the disposal of Crown lands.[55] The influence of his father's generation of reformers lay behind all these foundation goals.

Reid discussed the land question in detail in an article he wrote for the *Sydney University Review* in November 1881, where he alerted his readers to the likelihood of the fast-approaching 1888 centenary of first British settlement resulting in the curious eyes of the world being fixed upon his home colony. His essay on New South Wales two years earlier had argued that, statistically, there was much to get excited about. Yet the 'disastrous failure', as he put it, of the 1861 land laws, laws subsequently manipulated to make the squatting 'shepherd kings' even more powerful, had to be addressed. Put simply, in Reid's words: 'The laws which were to create a hardy race of independent yeomen have foisted upon New South Wales a new order of territorial aristocracy'. Fix the laws, he declared, or risk global condemnation in 1888. It was a stance both timely and, for a new member of the Assembly, courageous.[56]

As Reid's law practice gathered pace he made land and education his core issues in the parliament. The land debate brought him into conflict with both of the veteran leaders of the liberal cause, Sir Henry Parkes and Sir John Robertson, and their creaking coalition. Reid set about questioning the records of both, first by designating himself as one of their 'independent' supporters, but a supporter who had 'no obligation to support them when I think them in the wrong'; secondly, by making sure that his actions gave substance to his words.[57] When Alexander Stuart in 1884 became the latest New South Wales Premier on the chaotic merry-go-round of local politics, he was so impressed by Reid's mature performance in the Assembly, and his impeccable economic credentials, that he offered him the position of Treasurer in his new government. Opportunity knocked.

Yet with an assurance typical of Reid right through his political career, he rejected the plum job, instead requesting the underfunded Education portfolio. Public Instruction. The clue for this decision can be found in a speech he delivered years later when he advanced his firm belief that 'the history of mankind ought to teach the ruling powers of every country that far better than the hunt for diamonds in the soil is the hunt for genius amongst the great mass of the children of the country'.[58] As his biographer Winston McMinn sums up, Reid

> … saw a need for energetic administration in the field of education, where the coalition had been content to proclaim its 'free, compulsory and secular' doctrine and then let the grass grow.[59]

Aware that urgent action was required, Reid introduced several egalitarian reforms. Within a year he had abolished all tent schools, refreshed and enlarged the colony's primary school education system, established his colony's first high schools, made history compulsory in all State schools and made evening classes available to part-time students as a pathway to university study.

Reid's new technical education system was so good that the other colonies copied it almost immediately. In his 1917 *Reminiscences* he wrote that there was 'no page of Australian history more stimulating' than the education story.[60] He played his own key part in it at just the right time, responsible for a set of improvements that made a mockery of the grand old charlatan Henry Parkes' claim to being the founder of New South Wales school education. Reid did at least as much in 12 months as Parkes had managed in decades, and it was real and lasting achievement. This did not go unnoticed. Assembly colleagues and the general public alike were impressed, and it did no harm to his growing popularity that Richard Twopeny, in his widely read 1883 book *Town Life in Australia*, rated Reid as 'the nearest approach to a statesman that Australia [has] seen'.[61]

In the Legislative Assembly as the decade progressed, Reid was an astute and consistent voice, the voice of liberal principle. Nothing fazed him; nothing intimidated him; nothing disturbed his equanimity. When a wave of xenophobic, anti-Chinese sentiment swept the chamber, Reid virtually alone stood out as a beacon of objectivity and humanitarian common sense.[62] Henry Parkes could not ignore him, so he tried his best to neutralise him. When Parkes became New South Wales Premier for the third time in 1885, he offered Reid any portfolio he wished in order to bring him into the tent. Reid refused, twice, content to bide his time and build on a growing reputation for independence, honesty and fair play.

Still single and in his mid-40s, Reid had also gained a reputation as something of a ladies' man, a raconteur, someone who regularly frequented Sydney's numerous outlets for evening entertainment. One contemporary politician, Labor's William Holman, noted Reid's weakness for 'the pleasures of the club, the theatre, [and] the ballroom', but if this was a failing, it was one with which Reid himself was entirely comfortable.[63] On one occasion Parkes attempted to scandalise him on the floor of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly when an attractive young woman seated herself in the public gallery. Parkes was asked who she was, and replied: 'Well I don't know myself. I've asked George Reid and [Bernhard Ringrose] Wise, and they don't know, from which I conclude that she must be a woman of good reputation'.[64]

Newspaper and magazine commentary embellished the portrait of Reid's carefree social life. Over his long career it won him votes, as did the humour he routinely derived in his speeches from his ever-expanding bodily shape. He loved making jokes about it, and the Sydney public loved him for it. They flocked to his public meetings in droves.

By first entertaining his audiences with an engaging patter, Reid would then go on to persuade them with policy made accessible. As the *Review of Reviews* journal put it: 'Reid had the power of making a proposition in political economy as delightful as a passage from Mark Twain …'[65] No notes, just an understanding of how to work his audience, the unruly, notoriously impatient Sydney crowd. His spontaneity became legendary, beginning on the day he first stood for office when he outfoxed the experienced Henry Parkes on the electoral podium. As historian LF 'Fin' Crisp notes, Reid came to dominate 'the raffish inner Sydney electorates in the late nineteenth-century days of gaslight and torchlight rallies addressed from public-house balconies'.[66] If he was not the best platform speaker in the Empire, he was in the top few, as appreciative English audiences endorsed decades later when he became Australian High Commissioner in London.

When a heckler in Newcastle, north of Sydney, pointed to Reid's prodigious stomach and asked what he intended to call the baby, he shot back: 'If it's what I think it is, all piss and wind, I'll call it after you young feller'. Travelling by train or bus he was known to offer his seat to not one but two ladies, and when he saw an advertisement in England for 'Reid's Stout' he remarked, 'Of course he is, but they need not proclaim the fact'. Reid is also given credit for this one: when a woman called out at a political meeting, 'If I was your wife, I'd poison you', he replied: 'Madam, if you were my wife, I'd poison myself'.[67] Even Bernhard Wise, eventually Reid's bitter enemy, had to concede in his account of Federation, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (1913), that Reid was 'a master of platform arts'.[68]

What Wise would not acknowledge was the degree to which Reid dominated the 1890s, surely the most tempestuous, politically complex decade in the 230-year history of non-Aboriginal Australia. At its beginning, the signs were anything but good. The country-wide drought was worsening, the country-wide economic depression was deepening, and the prospect of a federation of the six disparate colonies seemed as distant as ever. Sir John Robertson was not alone in his pessimism. 'Federation', he declared, was 'as dead as Julius Caesar'.[69]

Reid, late 1880s.

George Reid was motivated by the volatile times. In 1889, he orchestrated the merger of the Free Trade Association and the new Liberal Political Association and, in November 1891, he replaced the declining, spiteful Parkes as leader of the Free Trade Party.[70] Circumstances worked in his favour but you make your own luck. Reid's Assembly contribution had made him few enemies; he had seen to it that revered community figures such as the Rev John Dunmore Lang and popular poet Henry Kendall were properly commemorated by their colonial community; he had become his colony's most marketable politician; he had refused to involve himself in divisive sectarian debate; he had almost singlehandedly advanced schools and schooling in New South Wales ; and he had made a singular contribution already to his colony's political, cultural and sporting life.

The job as Premier of the 'Mother Colony' beckoned.

The political manoeuvring in New South Wales in the early 1890s was unrelenting, focused mainly on Free Trade versus Protection and the settling of personal scores. With the onset of the federation debate, public discourse only got harder. Reid had nothing to do with its re-emergence at the Australian Federation Conference in Melbourne in February 1890. He was only interested in possible outcomes, so when the likes of Parkes and Victoria's Alfred Deakin enthused participants with their lofty utterances down in the southern colony, Reid mocked the gathering in a Legislative Assembly speech of 21 May 1890 as 'the oratorical and rhetorical stage of the movement'.[71] Only brotherly love, he commented, had prevailed. Issues of substance – finance, tariffs, defence, railways, a capital city, a High Court, and much more – were notably absent.

This did not worry Reid at all. But the next federation gathering, the far more formidable National Australasian Convention in Sydney in March/April 1891, did. The reason was that the Sydney delegates were tasked with drafting a bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia. Reid was right in maintaining that, in New South Wales at that time, there was little obvious interest in Federation, and he was wary that his colony's free-trade principles could be a casualty of nationhood. New South Wales joining this naïve version of Federation would be, as he memorably put it, like a reformed alcoholic setting up house with five drunkards.[72]

The framers of the draft constitution, Reid felt, were 'almost childish' in their failure to consider 'the manifold difficulties which surround the subject'. The bill was 'undemocratic' and the voters of New South Wales knew it. In making this case, Reid knew he would be branded by Federation's barrackers as the enemy in their midst, 'the implacable enemy of Federation', but he was unconcerned. In an essay he published in the *Sydney Quarterly Magazine* in March 1891, he put the case:

> My influence was not exerted until I saw an attempt about to be made to fasten upon young Australia a crude and unworkable Constitution. Then it was that I cut across the grain of the federal movement, and did my utmost to make the grave defects of the scheme known to all men, especially to those of my own colony whose interests had been grossly neglected.[73]

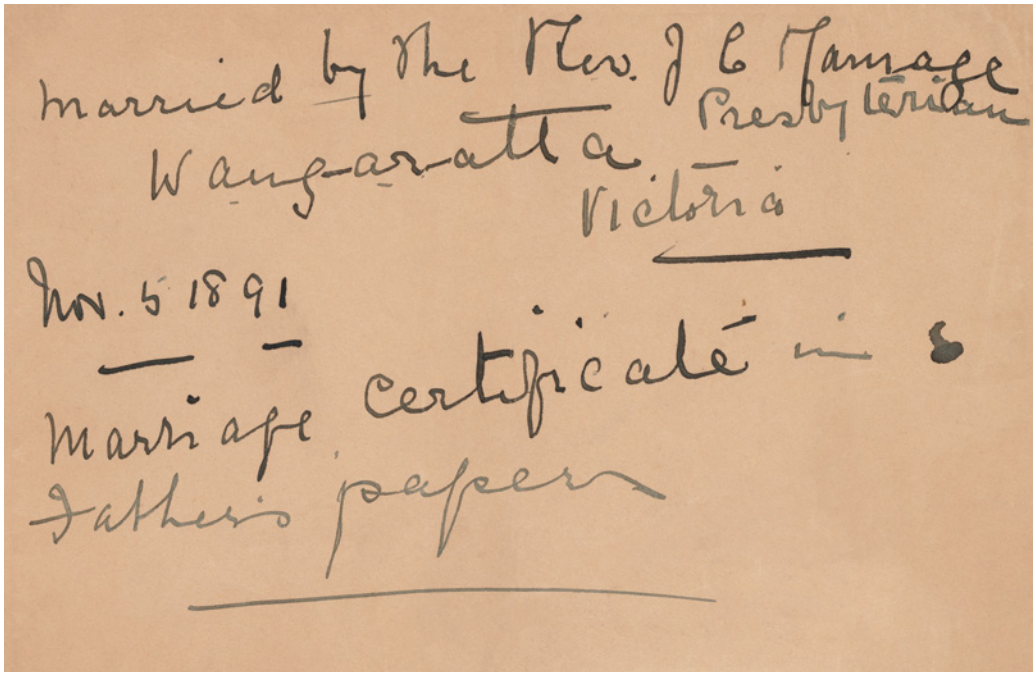
Taking it upon himself to speak once again on behalf of 'young Australia' was a shrewd ploy, one he knew would be well-received in the ambitious 'Mother Colony', but beneath the artifice was the unshakeable belief that New South Wales must not 'cast the priceless fabric of [its] independence into the crucible of federation without some thought'.[74]

During a number of testing months at this time, there was a development in Reid's private life that threatened to subsume all else for the 46-year-old. An affair truly of the heart. Biographer Winston McMinn spends less than a page of his book on Reid's sudden and mysterious marriage on 17 November 1891 to Flora Ann Brumby, the vivacious 23-year-old daughter of a Cressy, Tasmania, farming couple. He puzzles as to why the marriage was not announced until August of the following year, 1892. Flora, a forbear of former Victorian Premier John Brumby, was half Reid's age and about a quarter of his size. When her husband died in 1918, Flora gave her maiden surname as 'Bromby' (with an 'o') and it was suggested on one occasion by Reid that she was related to Tasmania's popular Anglican Bishop Bromby. The claim was nonsense. McMinn unsatisfactorily concludes that the details attached to the couple's courtship are 'obscure'.[75]

It is possible that the grapevine gossip at the time was correct – that George Reid, massive and charming George, had secured Flora's affections at the expense of rival politician, Bernhard Ringrose Wise. Regardless, what we know for sure is that about six and a half months after the marriage took place in late 1891 Flora gave birth to a daughter, Florence Marion 'Thelma' Reid, on 24 May 1892. The marriage vows were made in secrecy in the Presbyterian Manse at Wangaratta, in northern Victoria, far from the prying eyes of the newspaper and magazine journalists of Sydney and Melbourne. The miracle is that John Norton's *Truth* newspaper – described by historian Mark McKenna as 'slanderous, racist, muck-raking, gossipy, and popular'[76] – never got wind of the story, nor any of the magazines bent on exploiting scandal. The Katoomba *Mountaineer* on one occasion made an oblique reference to a possible pregnancy, but that was it.[77]

In the three years from 1891 to 1894, from the time Reid became leader of the Free Trade Party to the year when he became New South Wales Premier, he regularly visited Melbourne, where Thelma was being looked after by a widowed friend in the inner city. Some of his trips were questioned by journalists, just as Flora's long absences from Sydney were noted in a few Sydney papers. But there were no further enquiries. The Reids somehow managed to cocoon this aspect of their family's life. When Reid was nominated as a delegate to the prestigious Australian Cricket Council on 13 September 1892 he declined the honour, citing 'pressure of political duties'.[78] He wrote to his journalist friend, JA Hogue, at the time of the muted public announcement of the Reids' wedding, maintaining that he did not care 'for the assertion of it in the daily papers. In fact I particularly wish to settle down as quietly as possible'.[79] He was giving nothing away.

The deception was skilfully handled from the start. Daughter Thelma was publicly introduced into the community sometime in early 1897, with some sleight-of-hand, years after the birth of one brother, Douglas, in 1895, and before the birth of a second brother, Clive, in 1899. The Reids' pact of secrecy probably brought the couple closer together in what proved to be one of Australian politics' most loving and enduring marriages.



A precious scrap of paper kept by Reid, recording the details of his very private wedding to Flora Brumby in late 1891. Wangaratta was chosen for its remote location, far from the prying eyes of the journalists of Sydney and Melbourne.

This sign welcomes visitors today to the Tasmanian town of Cressy. Flora Brumby grew up there in modest circumstances on a struggling farm, one of 16 children.

The only tangible evidence in Cressy today marking the town's link to the Brumby family in the nineteenth century.

The moon among smaller constellations

In the build-up to Federation, George Reid was arguably the country's best-known and most popular politician. Composer Jeannette Brookes was obviously a devoted fan.

Untroubled by family considerations, Reid became the most influential politician in Australia as the 1890s progressed. The cleanskin leader of the Free Traders in New South Wales, he sought government for his rejuvenated party, and as the unflinching opponent of the Federationists-at-any-cost on the national stage, he demanded a more democratic, properly researched constitution for an Australian Federation – one which did justice to what he regarded as the preeminent status of New South Wales among the six colonies.

A number of Reid's lasting political achievements occur in the pressure-packed 1890s decade, most of them taking place in his five years as New South Wales Premier, from his election with a working majority in July 1894 to his resignation on 13 September 1899. It is worth noting that the two men usually credited with being Australia's most important 'federation fathers', Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin, were under no real pressure during these same years. They were free to roam the country spruiking Federation's cause. Reid, in contrast, was hard at work running the continent's oldest, most populous and most opinionated colony.

After running what historian Bede Nairn describes as a 'magnificent campaign'[80] to win government for the Free Traders, in his first parliamentary session as Premier, Reid moved immediately to introduce a number of bills which took their principles from his long-held liberal and progressive sentiments: amendment of the colony's land laws to allow small farmers to obtain a better foothold, with five million acres made available for mixed dairy use; a fiscal policy overhaul to achieve a more equitable taxation system; a Public Service Act to put it beyond political influence; an inquiry into the public service; a Local Government Act; a Coal Miners' Regulation Bill; amendments to the Mining on Private Property Act and the Conciliation and Arbitration Act to introduce compulsory provisions; establishment of a Department of Industry and Labour; measures to improve the lot of shop and factory workers (applying to hours of work, minimum standards for sanitation and ventilation, and the prohibition of children under 13 being employed); a Public Health Act; and the introduction of navigation laws, company regulation and a public works program.[81] With depression and drought still pervasive, this was by any measure an extraordinarily ambitious program. It needed the support of a Labor Party on the rise, and received it.

Reid knew he had formulated a genuine reform agenda when his policies, as he later commented, were 'abused from two extreme points of view'. This, he felt, was 'strong presumptive evidence' that his government had embarked on a 'fair and moderate course'.[82]

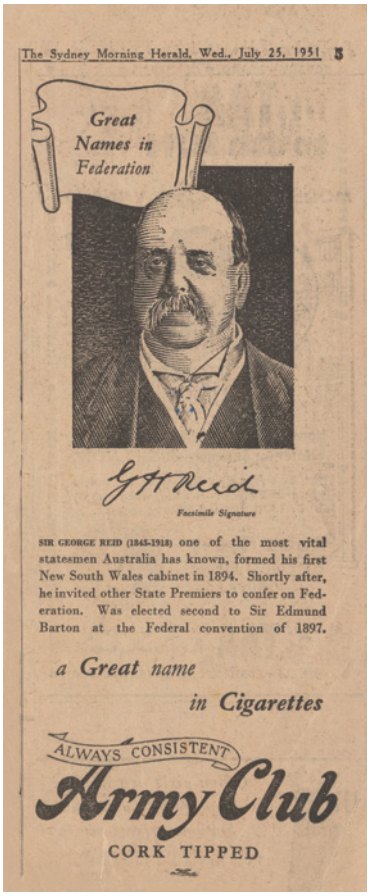
The Reid Government's policy initiatives included three planks from the Labor Party's 'fighting platform' and four from its general platform. In Volume Five of his multi-volume history of Australia, Manning Clark discusses Reid in an oddly cursory manner, yet he is right in stating that Reid and the Labor Party appeared to be

'strange bedfellows'.[83] At first there was caution and a little suspicion on both sides, as each endeavoured to find a legislative pathway for measures that expressed their common ground. Negotiations were assisted by Reid's inclusion in his first ministry of former Staffordshire and Lithgow coal miner (and for 15 months in 1913–14, sixth Australian Prime Minister) Joseph Cook. An early Labor Party leader in New South Wales, Cook refused to sign Labor's 'solidarity' pledge. Over the coming decades he would become one of the Commonwealth parliament's most conservative members. In 1894, however, Reid's tactic was a shrewd one, giving his cabinet the appearance of an inclusive 'labour tinge', a working class tinge.[84]

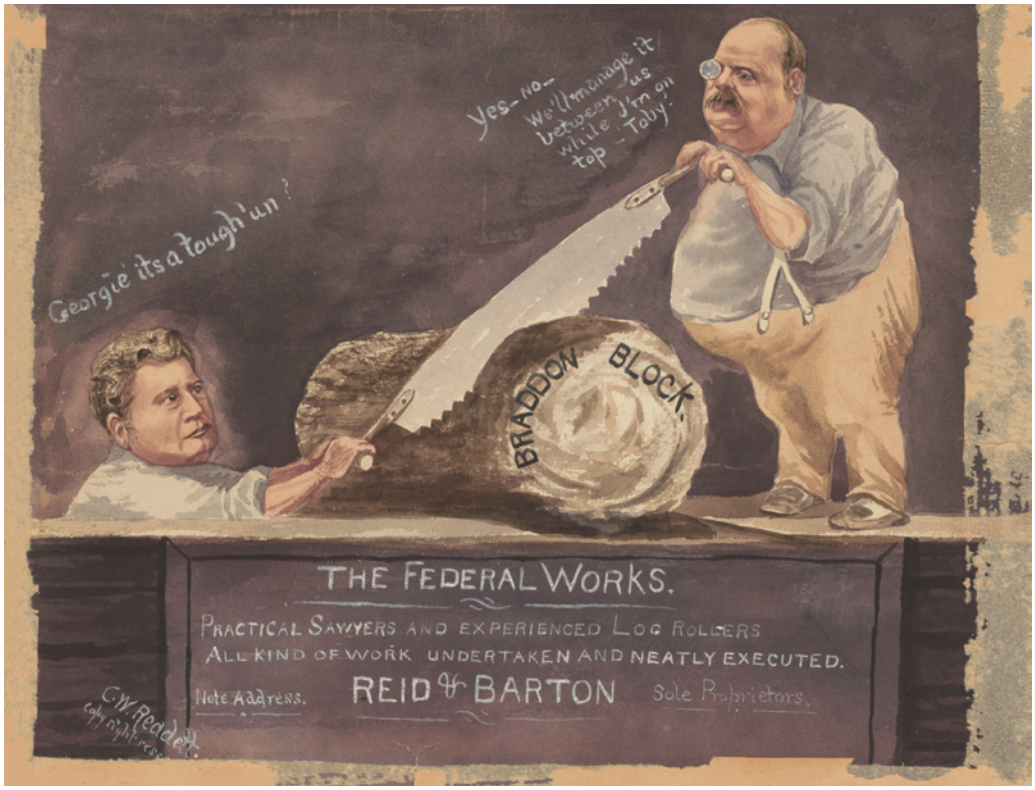
Reid's problem once in government was not the Labor Party, it was the arrogant, reactionary New South Wales Upper House, the Legislative Council. The open combat between a determined Premier and intractable Council used to getting its own way is too large a narrative to cover here, but enough to say that the Council rejected the suite of progressive Reid initiatives, sending them back to the Legislative Assembly in tatters. Reacting to the deadlock, Reid boldly called for another election the following year, 1895, and this time he won convincingly. The Legislative Council thus had its wings clipped; Henry Parkes took on Reid in his own seat and lost badly, his long career ending in humiliation; and Reid finally had the freedom to embark on his 'Rampaging Electoral Program' with Labor Party backing.[85] In the first session of the new 1895 parliament the Reid Government brought down 26 Bills, 20 of which became law. This was, as Bede Nairn states, 'a success rate for legislation unparalleled in the colony's history'.[86]

Reid set an impressive example in a talented parliament that included no less than four future Prime Ministers: Reid, Cook, John Christian 'Chris' Watson and William Morris 'Billy' Hughes. In this elevated company, it was Reid who shone brightest. As one contemporary creatively observed, he was 'like the moon among the smaller constellations'.[87] Even staunch labour newspaper, the *Worker*, on 13 July 1895 unreservedly praised the legitimate quality of his leadership: 'For the first time we have a Premier who has shown himself favourable to progressive legislation, and who has given evidence of his *bona fides* by cutting himself adrift from the old high and dry political parties …'[88] Reid had promised 'real Democratic politics' and he delivered in the hothouse atmosphere of Australia's leading colony.[89] This was the pinnacle of his political career and, as historian MH Ellis observes, the raft of measures he introduced 'formed the basis of the foundations of modern political policy and the [Australian] welfare state'.[90] In a number of later accounts, Alfred Deakin's second Commonwealth Government of 1905–08 gets the credit for this, most recently from journalist Paul Kelly in his book *The End of Certainty* (1993). Kelly labels Deakin's achievements 'the Australian Settlement' but this fertile ground was first tilled by Deakin's avowed political opponent, his bow-legged, sweet-sucking, free-trading antagonist Reid, a full decade before.[91]

Reid's last couple of years as Premier were less productive as the Labor Party became more aware of its growing electoral appeal as a stand-alone party, and the monied men of the Legislative Council continued to obstruct the will of the people whenever they thought they could get away with it. Ironically, even as Reid enjoyed his most significant electoral and legislative triumphs, the political ground was shifting under him. Aware of a spike in community interest in nationhood as the new century got closer, Reid turned his attention to the faltering cause of Federation. The interventions for which he alone was responsible between 1895 and 1899 cannot be underestimated. For these, he has not received the recognition he deserves.



From the time he was made a Minister in the NSW colonial government of Alexander Stuart in 1883, Reid was rarely out of the political and cultural spotlight in either Australia or, decades later, in Great Britain. In an active public career of over 35 years, his many peccadilloes – massive size, catnaps in parliament, monocle, sweet-sucking, among them – together with his unmatched ability to entertain and persuade an audience in rowdy outdoor meetings, made him an irresistible target for cartoonists intent on caricature. He was popular, admired, even loved by his supporters.


Georgie it's a tough 'un?
Yes-no-
We'll manage it between us while I'm on top - Toby.
BRADDON BLOCK.
THE FEDERAL WORKS.
PRACTICAL SAWYERS AND EXPERIENCED LOG ROLLERS
ALL KIND OF WORK UNDERTAKEN AND NEATLY EXECUTED.
Note Address. REID & BARTON Sole Proprietors.
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Nuttall

Yes–No Reid

Reid in favoured long coat, c. 1904.

To begin with, Reid refreshed the federation idea when he invited the other colonial Premiers to cool Hobart during a roasting Australian summer in December 1895, with the aim of obtaining agreement on the best way forward. The case for a Federation was boosted in the Christmas/New Year months by a cricket series taking place between a combined colonial team, playing under an Australian banner, and a visiting England team, in front of massive crowds and generating unprecedented press interest.[92] With the colony of Victoria still tainted by the institutional corruption of the later 1880s, and Melbourne viewed by many as the 'city of financial stink', Reid's agenda in Hobart was readily pursued.[93] He submitted and had carried a promotional resolution confirming Federation as 'the great and pressing question of Australasian politics', before engineering several more specific proposals based on Dr John Quick's well-circulated 'Corowa Plan'.[94]

At the Corowa People's Conference in 1893 (not attended by either Reid or Henry Parkes) attendees endorsed the Quick initiative, 'an inspired break-away' according to Quick's scholarly colleague, Robert Garran, whereby each colony would pass an Act for the election of representatives to attend a national convention, the assemblage tasked with adopting a draft Federal Constitution which would then be put to a referendum in all colonies.[95] Quick was aware of Reid's vital strategic importance if a breakthrough was to be made. After months of political inertia following the Corowa meeting, he lobbied the New South Wales Premier during 1894.

Thus Reid was well-briefed on the 'Corowa Plan' by the time he arrived in Tasmania. He liked the idea. The pathway was simple, logical, process-driven, and Henry Parkes had nothing to do with it! The other colonial Premiers knew that without New South Wales there would be no Federation, so their supporting vote in Hobart was a foregone conclusion. With one or two dissenting votes on minor propositions, the Quick Plan skated through. Reid himself made a few fine-tuning modifications that were readily accepted.

There would be further delays, but eventually Reid steered through the Australasian Federation Enabling Act at the end of the year so that planning could begin for the three separate meetings of the National Australasian Convention, to be held between March 1897 and March 1898 in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. Each participating colony would be represented by 10 elected delegates.

Then came Bathurst. In November 1896, Reid threw his considerable weight behind the New South Wales town of Bathurst's boutique Peoples' Federal Convention. As the host Premier, he offered the more than 200 delegates free train passes and addressed the gathering himself in exuberant mood as he sought to consolidate a place for Federation in what he had the year before in Melbourne termed the 'hearts of the masses of the people'.[96] As their motto, the delegates adopted 'By our Union we are made equal to our destiny'. It was persuasive propaganda. Reid recognised that colonial hearts were softening to the idea of nationhood, and he re-located himself

accordingly. With some reluctance he conceded that Federation now surpassed the fiscal issue in the public's mind. The relevant question was no longer whether Federation's time had come; it was the legislative shape it would have on arrival.

The first of the historic meetings of the National Australasian Convention took place in Adelaide in March and April 1897. Reid dominated the proceedings. Even his nemesis Alfred Deakin had to temporarily suppress his prejudice and admit that Reid was:

> … [the] most conspicuous figure at the Convention, its official author and in matters of moment its leader … Premier of the greatest colony, the best platform speaker, rejoicing in platitudes of liberality and large-heartedness, revelling in quip and jest in private, where he was always a jolly good fellow, as well as in public and thus monarch of all he surveyed … he was at once its master and its most popular member.[97]

Deakin's sentiments are puzzling, and not because of his antipathy for Reid. Reading the formal account of the Adelaide proceedings, it is apparent that Reid's contributions were in fact a mixed bag. After initially easing the concerns of those delegates, worried by his sharp tongue, when he said he would risk his 'fiscal principles in view of the commanding national destiny', as the gathering progressed it became increasingly clear that he would not.[98] Or rather, he was still not prepared to take his place in the complex discussions as a born-again federation booster, an 'Ultra'.

Reid attended in Adelaide primarily to protect the interests of his colony. At one point in the debate a member of the talented South Australian delegation accused Reid of being a traitor. Always alert to the value of humour as a tool in heated discussions, Reid feigned offence, countering by saying that there was no-one in the Convention who had 'a larger interest in the success of this enterprise than the one who organised it – who I happen to be'.[99] This was a smokescreen. On every substantive issue raised in Adelaide – such as the proposed Upper House's fairer representation of population difference between the colonies, resolution of deadlocks between the parliament's two houses, federal financing, and control of rivers and railways – Reid pointedly advocated his colony's case in a potential Commonwealth of states.

Two months after the Adelaide event, and at the top of his game, Reid departed Australian shores for England to attend, as New South Wales Premier, Queen Victoria's Jubilee and the associated Colonial Conference. The trip proved to be of seminal importance in Reid's life. In Britain for the first time since he was seven, he was overwhelmed by the lavish attention he received. Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, included Reid in his inner circle, giving him a confidential brief to report on the progress and substance of Australian Federation; he was made a Privy Councillor; he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University; and he visited the venerable William Gladstone at Hawarden Castle as an

honoured guest. He was also profoundly moved when the citizens of Johnstone, his Scottish birthplace, accorded him a 'triumphal progress' through narrow streets that he probably recalled.[100]

When Reid was presented with the keys to the 'Burgh of Johnstone' by the Provost and Town Clerk, the embossed text he was given began:

> We welcome you to your native land and birth-place, in this, the year of our Queen's Diamond Jubilee, when all parts of our great empire are rejoicing in the event which has occasioned your coming to Great Britain at this time, and also in the bond of brotherhood which is being more firmly united in the hearts of Her Majesty's subjects all over the world.[101]

The Jubilee extravaganza changed Reid, and not for the better. For reasons we can only speculate upon, his impeccable political and cultural radar would never again be quite as acute. Indeed, over the next 10 years he made some of the worst decisions of his entire political career.

Political colleague and friend, AB Piddington, reflected on the noticeable change in an article published a few years after Reid's death. After the 1897 visit to Britain, Piddington wrote, Reid began making 'egregious errors in judgement'.[102] He 'had not long returned from England and, still in the glamour of his successes there, he secluded himself from all his followers', getting 'quite out of touch with reality'. He suffered for it. His bond with the community began to show signs of wear and tear.

In March 1898, Reid delivered his controversial Sydney Town Hall 'Yes–No' speech, a close analysis of the draft Commonwealth Constitution Bill's strengths and weaknesses, yet an address of over two hours that pleased virtually no-one. Federation 'Ultras' were predictably outraged, one writing at the time that Reid's speeches 'supplied the bullets which other people fired'.[103] Most people in the audience, however, were simply looking for guidance on how to cast their vote, and they left disappointed when Reid stayed on the fence. He declared his intention to vote 'Yes' but cited numerous reasons why a 'No' vote made so much sense.

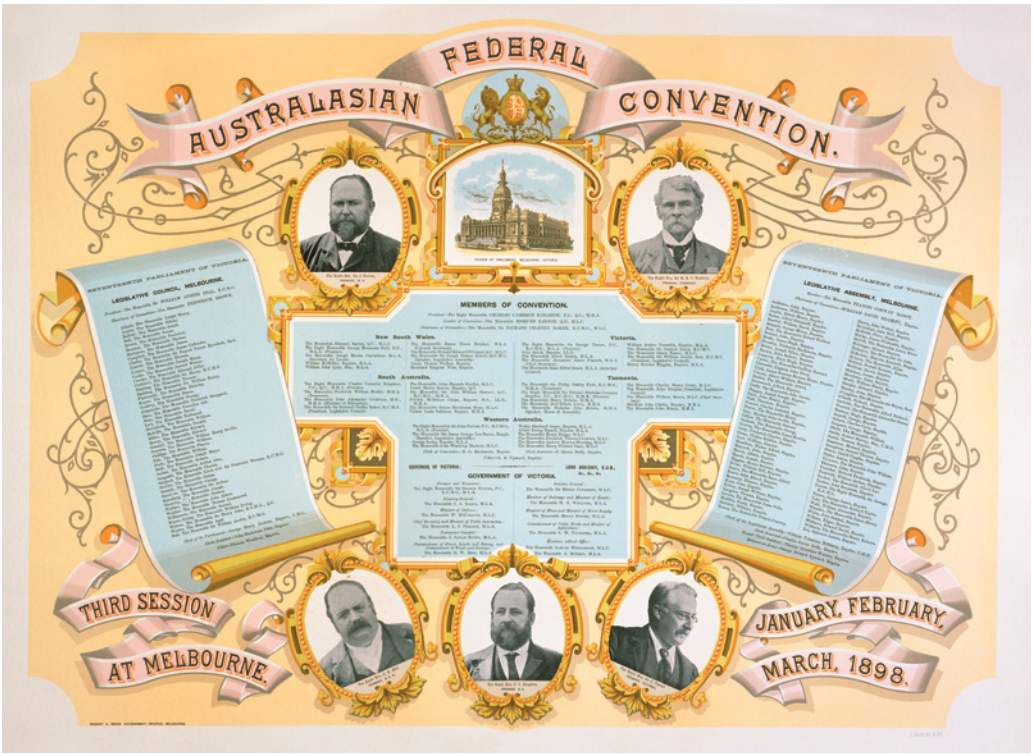
Soon after, the draft Bill was proposed in a first nation-wide referendum, an exercise complicated by the New South Wales Legislative Assembly's insistence on its colony obtaining at least an 80,000 'Yes' vote. The arbitrary number was not quite reached. Reid went to work extracting a few more concessions from the other Premiers prior to a second referendum, including that the new nation's capital city had to be located in his colony. He did not anticipate the backlash from his own supporters. Many Sydneysiders were disgusted with the capital city concession because, according to what became Section 125 of the Constitution, the capital had to be distant at least 100 miles (160 kilometres) from their harbour home. In one legislative stroke, Sydney's chance to be the capital, the 'treasure house of a nation's heart', was gone.[104] Erased.

Despite the fact that in a second referendum the imposed quota was attained, Reid's behaviour throughout the process was criticised in New South Wales, and particularly in Victoria, as opportunist and self-serving. His moon's bright glow dimmed. Alerting to this unanticipated turn of events, Labor MPs sensed a chance to progress their agenda more rapidly. They went looking for a better deal for their party with the new protectionist, anti-federalist leader of the New South Wales Opposition, William Lyne, a man characterised by Alfred Deakin as 'slow-witted', 'one of the feeblest leaders of an Opposition ever beheld in Australia'.[105] Lyne was eager to provide the Labor Party with concessions that free-trader Reid was not prepared to countenance, and he then had the numbers to be the new Premier. Reid re-located to the Opposition benches. Hence, he was not Premier in New South Wales at the time of Federation in 1901, and he would not be offered the prime ministership in the inaugural Commonwealth that, until 1899, had appeared to be his for the taking. That honour went to Edmund Barton. Deeply disappointed, Reid was left to rue the shift in his fortunes that had so suddenly consigned him to the periphery of political power in his colony and, in all likelihood, in the first Commonwealth parliament as well.

Reid's trip to Britain in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was a watershed moment in his life. He was 'duchessed', wined and dined by those in power. Chuffed by the attention, he was nonetheless determined to remain a proud New South Welshman, and proud Australian. A lifetime admirer of the venerable William Gladstone, Reid must have gained immense pleasure from the invitation he received to visit Gladstone at his Hawarden Castle residence. Seated from left: Sir Wilfred Laurier, Gladstone, Lady Carrington, Sir Richard Seddon, Mrs Gladstone, Reid. Standing: Lord Carrington, Sir Richard Dawes.

When this photo was taken, during the 1902 tours by Commonwealth politicians to find a suitable site for the nation's capital city, Sir William Lyne was captured precariously placed astride a farm fence. There are three future Prime Ministers in the shot: Alfred Deakin with his foot on the fence to the left, and Labor's Billy Hughes and Chris Watson with hats on (behind the fence) to the right. Some 50 years later, when the photograph was reproduced in a popular magazine, the caption mistakenly suggested it was George Reid on the fence. Both were of a size.

Enthusiastically celebrated in 1897 in the Scottish town of Johnstone (20 kilometres west of Glasgow) where he was born, Reid opened the 'Victoria Shelter' at nearby Quarrelton, together with the Laird of Johnstone, in recognition of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year. The refurbished Shelter can still be seen today.



The three National Australasian Convention meetings held in 1897–98 – in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne – were crucial to the eventual success of Federation. Reid dominated the Adelaide meeting, but when the focus turned finally to Melbourne his refusal to advocate Federation at any cost, along with the perception that he was consistently putting NSW first in his deliberations, ultimately undermined his nationwide appeal. The 'Yes–No' tag stuck.

Prime Minister, but at a cost

Sir John Longstaff's portrait of the Rt Hon Sir George Houstoun Reid, GCB GCMG KC, completed in 1916. The portrait is part of the Historic Memorials Collection.

Comfortably elected into the first Commonwealth parliament by the loyal voters of Sydney's eastern suburbs (former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's seat until recently), Reid found himself with the unenviable job of Federal Opposition leader in charge of a disparate, unruly group of Free Traders that included a hard rump of grizzled old men harbouring extreme political views at odds with Reid's own. His pursuit of the nation's top job only got harder and, under pressure, his decision-making continued to falter. 'Egregious errors' multiplied.[106] The free trade members in the Commonwealth parliament were different to those in his colonial parliament – more conservative, divided, truculent. The long, tiring train journey to the federal parliament in Melbourne for Reid and the other interstate members was both time-consuming and expensive, a tyranny of distance, and he had to ensure that his wife and three children were well cared for in Sydney. This meant juggling parliamentary and legal practice responsibilities. Both suffered, and it was not long before he was the target of newspaper criticism for his noticeable absences in the federal chamber. He could do nothing about it.

Times had changed. Reid's robust, personality-driven campaigning style and theatrical public performances did not fit neatly into a new century of rapidly altering political alliances and backroom scheming. Politics was getting more professional, with members less available to their constituents. The Free Trade/Protection issue vanished, giving way to a new generation of federal Labor and non-Labor politicians, most of whom opted for the protection of local industry. It was a much easier position to defend in a young nation wanting to give voice to a freshly grown patriotism.

Yet Reid has to shoulder his share of the blame for a surprising lack of adaptability in an under-performing, nine-year federal parliamentary career. When Alfred Deakin moved cleverly to occupy the ideological middle ground of Australian politics in a mutually beneficial deal with the Labor Party, Reid was left without an effective strategy. His race and religious views narrowed, and the Imperial connection became more important to him than it had ever been in the past.

In this unflattering context, Reid became Australia's fourth national leader for a short period in 1904–05, a lame prime ministership under intense pressure from the outset. He only got the job by displacing the world's first national Labor Government, under Chris Watson, and he was unceremoniously replaced by the wily Deakin a mere 10 months later. For six of Reid's 10 months in office the parliament was in recess. His government managed to get six Acts passed, including passage of the controversial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, legislation regarded by Reid as an 'historical achievement', though he was acutely aware that he 'came into office in the middle of one session and [was] strangled before another session could begin'.[107]

Reid resisted any blame for his part in the short life of the Watson government but the *Tribune* newspaper was not in any mood to be accommodating, describing the Reid Government as 'a temporary combination of incompatibles', and Reid himself in terms he would scarcely have appreciated:

> As a reckless, borrowing, spendthrift people, more attached to racecourses and theatres than to considerations of the public good, it is fitting that we should have a clown for a Prime Minister.[108]

For many political commentators, Reid's desperation to be prime minister, whatever the circumstances and at whatever personal cost, had a marked impact on his relationship with the Australian electorate. Even his biographer concedes that it was 'an exercise in unprincipled opportunism'.[109] Unflattering newspaper caricatures multiplied.

Reid's image was further tarnished in 1906 when he ran Australia's first 'red-baiting' campaign against former Labor allies, warning the nation to beware the 'socialist tiger' in its midst.[110] The scare tactics failed, his 'retrogressive' stance, according to the dignified Chris Watson, virtually pushing the Labor Party into partnership with Deakin's Protectionists.[111] For a few years, the alliance prospered. Reid's long-held fear that Labor caucus solidarity (by which members voted in a block on the floor of the House) might result in the party forming national government in its own right, was soon to be realised. Had Reid and Alfred Deakin aligned earlier under the broad liberal banner, the Labor ascendancy might have been temporarily halted. They did not. The non-Labor forces were in disarray. As the Australian Federation closed in on a tenth anniversary, both Reid and Deakin looked like yesterday's men.

Members of the Reid Commonwealth Government, 1904–05 with Governor-General, Lord Northcote, seated, centre. The *Tribune* newspaper dismissed Reid's short-lived government as 'a temporary combination of incompatibles'. Harsh but fair.

Reid alongside his good friend Arthur Elworthy, owner/editor of the *Gundagai Times*, strolling with umbrella down the main street of the southern NSW town of Gundagai in c. 1904. The shadow of photographer, Charles Louis Gabriel, figures prominently in shot.

As NSW Premier, Reid is seen here discussing matters with his secretary for Mines and Agriculture, Sydney Smith. Smith would become a member of Reid's Commonwealth government and, importantly, the Free Trade whip in the House.

Photograph sent by Flora Reid to her brother, Frank, taken in 1906 when the Reid family was enjoying a few leisurely days in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

High Commissioner, at the heart of Empire

Reid in High Commissioner's attire, c. 1910.

For George Reid, however, there was to be one final chapter in the engaging story of his public life, a concluding chapter about to unfold in England. While his two most discerning biographers, McMinn and Fin Crisp, portray the later years as 'anti-climax', Reid's decade spent in the northern hemisphere was hardly that.[112] It is indisputable that the years in the Federal Parliament were disappointing when compared to his legislative accomplishments before 1901, yet such an assessment does not do justice to the array of additional achievements that followed his departure from Australia.

In England, Reid re-discovered a purpose and direction that had been absent for years. A little background is needed. In late 1909, a Bill was passed in the Commonwealth Parliament to constitute the office of Australia's High Commissioner in London.[113] No less than eight administrations in Federation's first nine years delayed the creation of the position. Influential political and social commentator of the day, HG Turner, states in his book, *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth* (1911), that there was more to the delay than ongoing political instability:

> The national consideration of securing the ablest man, from whatever source, was subordinated to the idea that it was a prize naturally pertaining to political services. The possibility of placating a powerful opponent, or the necessity of rewarding a supporter who had saved the situation, could not be ignored in the ever-present strife between the ins and the outs.[114]

Prime Minister Alfred Deakin stood at the head of his third national government in late 1909, the stuttering 'Fusion' government about to be crushed by Labor at the 1910 election. Conscious of his electoral vulnerability, Deakin was forced to heed the advice coming from within his own party that George Reid was (as Turner put it) an individual 'eminently fitted by capacity and temperament to represent the Australian people in the Mother Country'.[115] Reid was sounded out by his long-time admirer and supporter, Joseph Cook, and this led to Deakin reluctantly offering him the position – one, according to the government brief, 'at the heart of the Empire' needing someone who could make 'the honourable ambitions of Australia and the ardent spirit of its people better understood'.[116] The importance of political neutrality affixed to hardened experience was implicit. Deakin's instruction read:

> My colleagues and myself have no doubt but that these opportunities of promoting the strength and integrity of the Empire will weigh with you when considering this invitation. Our High Commissioner will be able to take an active personal part in the realisation of those constructive ideals shared by the vast majority of the people of the Commonwealth.[117]

Reid was an obvious choice for the new job, arguably the best choice: politically experienced, financially expert, articulate, personable and, as a result of the Queen's Jubilee trip, known and well-respected by the London establishment.

It might well have been in the back of Deakin's mind at the time of the appointment that when Sydney hosted the federation parade on 1 January 1901, and the new nation's most prominent politicians were being transported along crowded streets to Centennial Park for the historic ceremony – with Barton and Deakin, as prime minister and deputy, at the forefront – it was the man relegated to the background chorus, New South Wales' former Premier George Reid, who got far and away the most applause from the tens of thousands of those in attendance. Confirmation of the appointment of the first Australian High Commissioner in London received widespread approval.

So Reid departed Australia at the end of 1909 to undertake a fresh set of challenges, satisfied when writing to a colleague in 1910 to say that he felt he had played 'the best sort of "not-out" innings in the great political game' in Australia.[118] He was content to carry his bat, and head off to England. Flora and the children joined him shortly after.

There is a book to be written on the Reid family's eventful decade at 'the heart of Empire' but it will have to wait.[119] It is enough to say that, in mature age, Reid was responsible for a busy and often inventive parting contribution to public life. He set a high standard for those who would follow him. To cite only a few of his important achievements in England in his first four years in the job:

- Tasked with being politically neutral, he carried out his ministerial instructions with diligence and a resolute sense of responsibility on behalf of his nation, a tricky appointment resulting in another personal triumph;

- Despite the fact that federal money was tight, and the High Commissioner's job far from a sinecure, Reid made such an impression that when an Andrew Fisher-led Labor Government came to power in Australia for a full three-year term, 1911–14, Reid settled into a constructive working relationship with both the new Prime Minister and his cabinet, mostly men with a working class background who warmed to his sound advice, reliability, creative engagement and diplomatic skill;

- As the prospect of war increased, Reid's financial acumen gained significantly more credit for his country in the nervous London money market; and

- He quickly established publicity and immigration departments for the High Commission which led to increased expenditure on advertising, in turn producing a net British immigration increase to Australia of 230,000 in 1911–13.

Reid's popularity throughout the United Kingdom, virtually from the time he commenced his duties as High Commissioner, can be gauged from the following selection of invitations, tributes and personal letters he received. He was often affectionately sketched with kangaroos (or, on occasion, kangaroos with cricket bats!). His good friend, Lord Grey, took to calling him 'Australia'.

BRITISH PRESS AND AUSTRALIA.

LUNCHEON TO SIR GEORGE REID.

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S ELOQUENT TRIBUTE TO THE BRITISH PRESS.

The Right Hon. Sir George H. Reid, G.C.M.G., P.C., D.C.L., K.C.

(Reprinted from "THE FINANCIER," September 9th, 1913.)

YESTERDAY a distinguished gathering, representing the British Press, entertained the Right Hon. Sir George Reid, G.C.M.G., P.C., D.C.L., K.C., High Commissioner for Australia, to luncheon at the Trocadero Restaurant. Mr. Robert Donald, President of the Institute of Journalists, presided, and amongst those present were the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie (High Commissioner for New Zealand); Sir John McCall (Agent-General for Tasmania); Sir H. W. Just (Colonial Office); the Hon. Peter McBride (Agent-General for Victoria); Major Sir Thomas Robinson (Agent-General for Queensland); the Hon. T. A. Coghlan (Agent-General for New South Wales); Mr. H. C. L. Anderson (Under-Secretary for Agriculture, N.S.W.); Sir J. W. Taverner, K.C.M.G.; Sir Francis Gould ("Westminster Gazette"); Mr. Hugh Chisholm ("Times"); Mr. J. S. R. Phillips ("Yorkshire Post"); Mr. Frank Sayer (THE FINANCIER); Mr. Mostyn Pigott ("World"), R. J. Arnott ("Canada"),

TELEPHONE No. 2932.

SECRETARY & LIBRARIAN:
W. ADDIS MILLER, M.A.

The Philosophical Institution,
4 Queen Street,
Edinburgh 28th Nov. 1916.

The Right Honourable
Sir George Houstoun Reid, G.C.B., M.P., etc.
1 Melbury Road, W.

Dear Sir George Reid,

The Directors of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution have now met, and they have instructed me to convey to you an expression of their cordial thanks for the most interesting and inspiring Inaugural Address which you delivered on the 7th inst. It is to them a matter of great satisfaction that the current Lecture Session of the Institution has been so auspiciously opened, and they are deeply indebted to you for the service thus rendered. They have had much pleasure in electing you an Honorary Life Member of the Institution.

I am,
Yours very truly,
W. Addis Miller.
Secretary.

TELEPHONE,
MAYFAIR 5418.

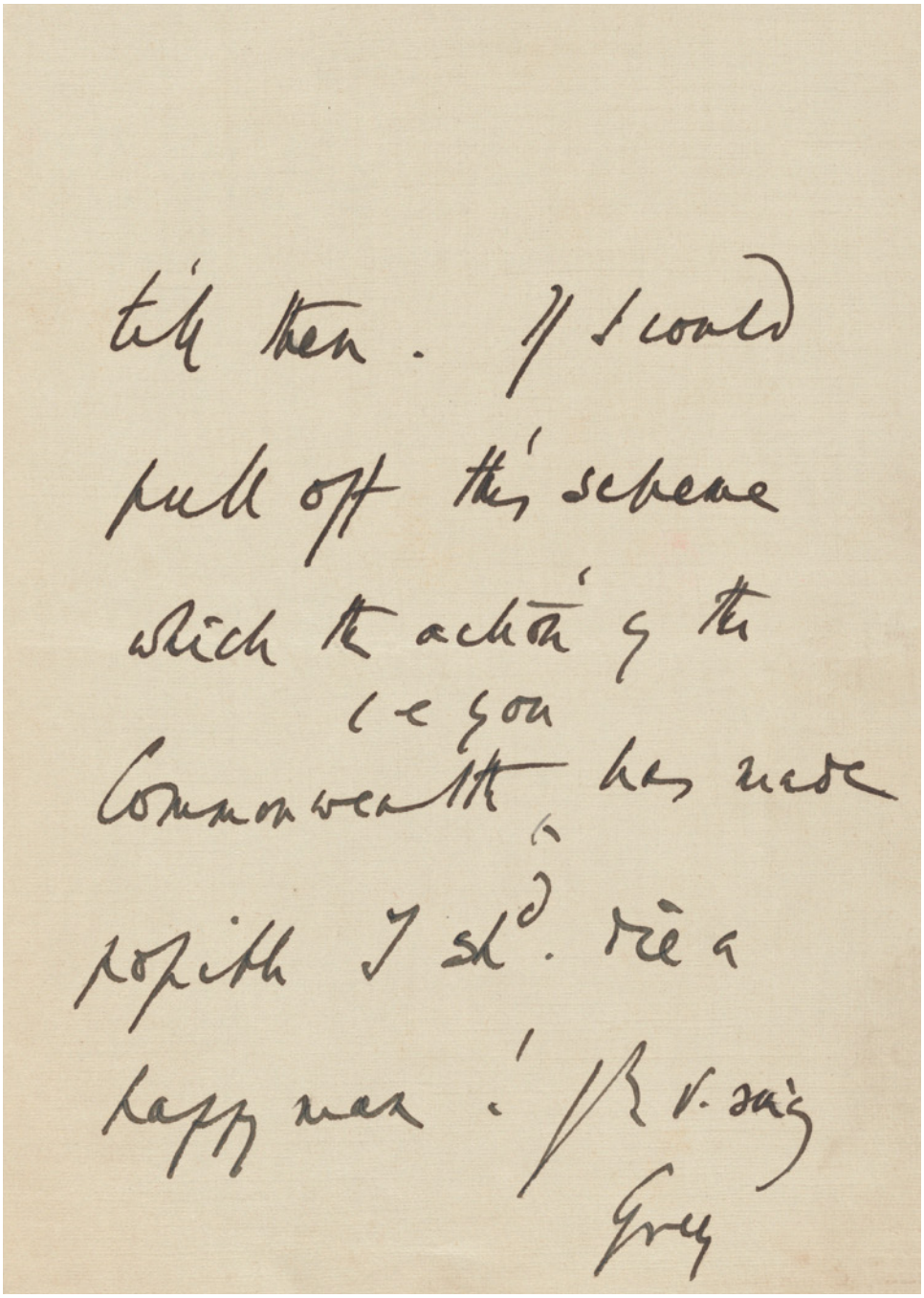
July 19/13

22, SOUTH STREET,
PARK LANE, W.

My dear Constance

Alas. I shall be (D.V.) in Northumberland Friday evening I am consequently unable very much to my regret accept your invitation

I am sending you
an advance copy
of my Aldrych Club
Booklet.
The Press will notice
it on Wednesday –
so please be mum




The High Kangaroter
Savage Clubs
Fifty-third Annual Dinner
Hotel Cecil
Saturday December 10th 1910
Sir George Reid K.C.M.G.
in The Chair
J.A.S
MENU
Huîtres Natives
Consommé Princesse. Crême Rachel
Suprême de Turbotin Valeska
Blanchailles
Caille a l'Egyptienne
Selle d'agneau à la Uroche
Sorbet au Kümmel
Dindonneau rôti et saucisses
Jambon d'York au Champagne
Baba aux fruits
Mandarines Glacées
Dessert

THE KOLBORN RESTAURANT

GLASGOW & LANARKSHIRE ASSOCIATION of LONDON.

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL DINNER.

ROYAL VENETIAN CHAMBER.
HOLBORN RESTAURANT.
SAT. FEB. 15TH 1913.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR GEORGE H REID, G.C.M.G.
THE HIGH COMMISSIONER of THE COMMONWEALTH
of AUSTRALIA IN THE CHAIR

War

Dramatic photograph of the Australian High Commission's 'foundation stone' event in the Strand, central London, on 24 July 1913. Reid's grasp of the importance of grand theatre as soft (pro-Australian) propaganda is obvious. He later recalled it as 'a beautiful day'. Sadly, he was seriously ill and could not attend the formal opening by King George V, on 3 August 1918, and died five weeks later.

One building effectively bookended the Reids' London years: the magnificent Australian High Commission in The Strand. From conception to grand opening, 1910–18, it appealed to Londoners as a self-assured expression of Australian cultural intent, and it was Reid who orchestrated most of the process. At first he had a couple of other sites in mind, one of them close to Trafalgar Square, but he settled on the ideally situated Strand site. Always disciplined in his approach to the spending of public money, he recommended frontage to a depth of only 70 feet. But when Prime Minister Fisher and a delegation of parliamentary MPs perused the chosen real estate, they could hardly believe their luck in securing such a prestigious spot in the middle of London, at the heart of Empire. Fisher instructed his High Commissioner to obtain freehold purchase of 'the whole block'.[120]

The building's foundation stone ceremony, held on 24 July 1913, featured speeches of significance by both King George V and the Australian High Commissioner. While the day, according to one newspaper, was 'bathed in quite Australian sunshine', the King's words were shaped by the darkening clouds of war.[121] Anxious to secure Australia's continuing allegiance in the event of a conflict, his appeal was blunt:

> I am well assured that, as in the past, in any national emergency Australia will be ready to play her part for the common cause, and that the loyalty of her sons will never be appealed to in vain.[122]

The King must have been gratified by Reid's response:

> Some ties have gone, but the ties that really do unite Britain and the Dominions beyond the seas – mutual betterment, pride of race, grandeur of tradition, glory of achievement, loyalty to the Throne, a resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder when our King calls – all these remain, and they are strengthened by the flight of time.[123]

When reporting the foundation stone event under the heading 'An Australian's Notes', the *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist ignored entirely the references to war by the day's main speakers. His interest was in the ceremony as powerful visual propaganda for the new Commonwealth. This was, he declared, 'the biggest day in London Australia has ever had', and he contemplated the inviting opportunity that such a formidable edifice represented, centrally located in the Empire's most celebrated city:

> … Australia House in London cries the beginning of the end of Australia as a Cinderella dominion, lurking in holes and corners of the Empire's metropolis, a ragged and forlorn expression of itself that is no more than travesty of the national claim we make at home … It remains to Australian public opinion to see to it that Australia's material statement of itself in this great house in the Strand is filled not only with national ideals, but with whole-hearted effort after them.[124]

To construct Australia's 'great house', Reid hired the Scottish firm, A Marshal Mackenzie and Son, at the same time ensuring that the building proceeded under the watchful artistic eye of an elite judging panel of some of his own country's leading artists, including Bertram Mackennal, John Longstaff, George Lambert, Fred Leist and Arthur Streeton. Scottish-born Australian architect John Smith Murdoch, who assisted the Mackenzie firm, only a few years later was appointed principal architect for the Provisional Parliament House, opened in Canberra in 1927 by King George V's son, Bertie (the king in the popular film, 'The King's Speech'), later George VI.

The Reid family, set to depart England for a short stay back in Australia in 1913. Daughter Thelma was to be married in Sydney, but the wedding was called off by her. She eventually married three times.

THE CHAIRMAN & DIRECTORS OF

John Brown & Company Limited

request the pleasure of the company of

The Right Honourable Sir George H. Reid, G.C.M.G. & Lady Reid, & Miss Reid,

at the Launch of

H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA"

(First-Class Armoured Cruiser for the Commonwealth of Australia.)

on Wednesday, 25th October, 1911, at 1·15 p.m.

The Naming Ceremony will be performed by Lady Reid.

Clydebank, Dumbartonshire.

An early reply is requested. On Acceptance, an Admission Card will be sent.

The launch of battle cruiser, HMAS *Australia*, regarded by both the Australian and British governments as a symbolic event of global geo-political significance. Performing the naming honours, Lady Reid asked that 'the old flag and the new flag ever fly together in peace and war'.

Flora and George in peace and war

Reid at Mena camp in Egypt, Christmas 1914, in his distinctive topper, chatting to General Sir John Maxwell and General William Throsby Bridges.

Throughout Reid's years as High Commissioner, his Tasmanian wife was a constant source of personal support and an invaluable asset in public life. With the three Reid children in their teens and enrolled in schools in England and France (in daughter Thelma's case), Flora was prepared to take on a number of formal and informal duties, and she also managed to find one or two ways to put her own distinctive stamp on the new surrounds. Both she and George continued to guard their privacy; however, occasional newspaper commentary and interviews do supply us with helpful clues about the depth of their relationship and its evolution once in England.

In April 1910, before departing Australia, Flora gave an interview to a *Melbourne Herald* journalist in which she ventured a little more of herself. Ignoring the narrow expectation at the time that a politician's wife should under no circumstances offer a word in public on matters political, she made a passing reference to Sir William Lyne – the man whose deal with the Labor Party in 1899 probably cost her husband the new nation's first prime ministership – and also offered a charming assessment of Australia's prospects under Prime Minister Andrew Fisher: 'Personally', she said, 'I do look upon Mr Fisher as a good man, and do not fear that any harm is going to happen to Australia'.[125] Wisely, Flora did not let the interview terminate on that note, opting to redirect attention back onto her husband, and her responsibilities as his spouse:

> 'Sir George', she remarked, 'has got one great ambition now. It is to lay the foundation of his new office in such a way that it may be of the utmost possible service to Australia. I can say this as his wife, with all sincerity, and I am going to try and do all that I can to help him.'

That she did. Barely off the ship in England, Flora organised a lavish reception for former American president (and confirmed suffragist) Theodore Roosevelt, in London for Edward VII's funeral, and soon after she threw herself into a round of social and cultural activities.[126] Initially, charity work took precedence. Flora's enthusiastic support of Queen Alexandra's fund-raising causes, particularly benefits for hospitals and charitable institutions, contributed to a warm, personal relationship with the Queen. It also meant that other friendships were cemented when, for example, she sold flowers in inner London streets alongside the likes of Lady Wilton, Lady Clementina Waring, Lady Carden, Lady Maxwell, Lady Limerick, Lady Jephson and Lady Cunard.[127] In this titled company, the farmer's daughter from tiny Cressy in northern Tasmania effortlessly held her own.

With the prospect of world war increasing, Flora found herself invited to launch ships throughout Great Britain. However, she was able to balance her formal participation in big public occasions with what were called her 'at homes' – when she provided 'large numbers of Australians with an opportunity to make contacts in England as well as helping them to deal with the problem of loneliness in the world's largest city'.[128] Both Flora and George in their English years relished the chance to meet and greet their countrymen in more informal settings.

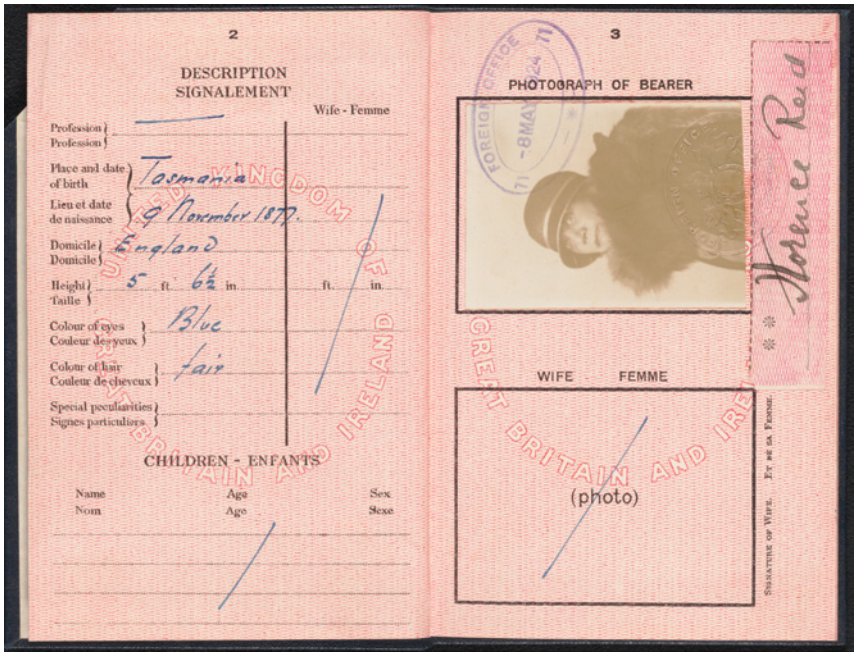
Flora was a fast learner, which stood her in great stead as the years progressed. When she accompanied her husband on a trip to Germany, Canada and the United States in 1912, she was surprised by the turn of events in Chicago when the media attention paid to her on occasion threatened to upstage her husband. George was fresh off a series of important meetings, including one with President Taft in Washington, but in America's progressive windy city, in the same year that Chicagoans Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin won the international competition to design Australia's new capital city, a number of local journalists were keen to get Flora's opinion on hot issues such as female suffrage.

Given that the women of the colony of South Australia gained the vote in 1894, and the women of Australia had secured the suffrage in 1902, the Reids from ultra-progressive Australia were a couple of considerable interest. This was no accidental curiosity. Australian suffrage activist Vida Goldstein had been an impressive representative of the women of Australia and New Zealand as their chosen delegate at the International Women's Suffrage Conference in Washington in 1902 (where she was invited to a private meeting with President Roosevelt); Australians Alice Henry and Miles Franklin had taken up residence in Chicago in 1906–07, destined to play prominent roles in the National Women's Trade Union League, Henry as the editor of the journal *Life and Labor*; and, in the same year as the Reids' American visit, the Labor Party under Andrew Fisher introduced the Australian Maternity Allowance to world acclaim, while celebrated American activist Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, chaired the Chicago convention that launched Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party on the national stage, Roosevelt standing as the presidential candidate.[129]

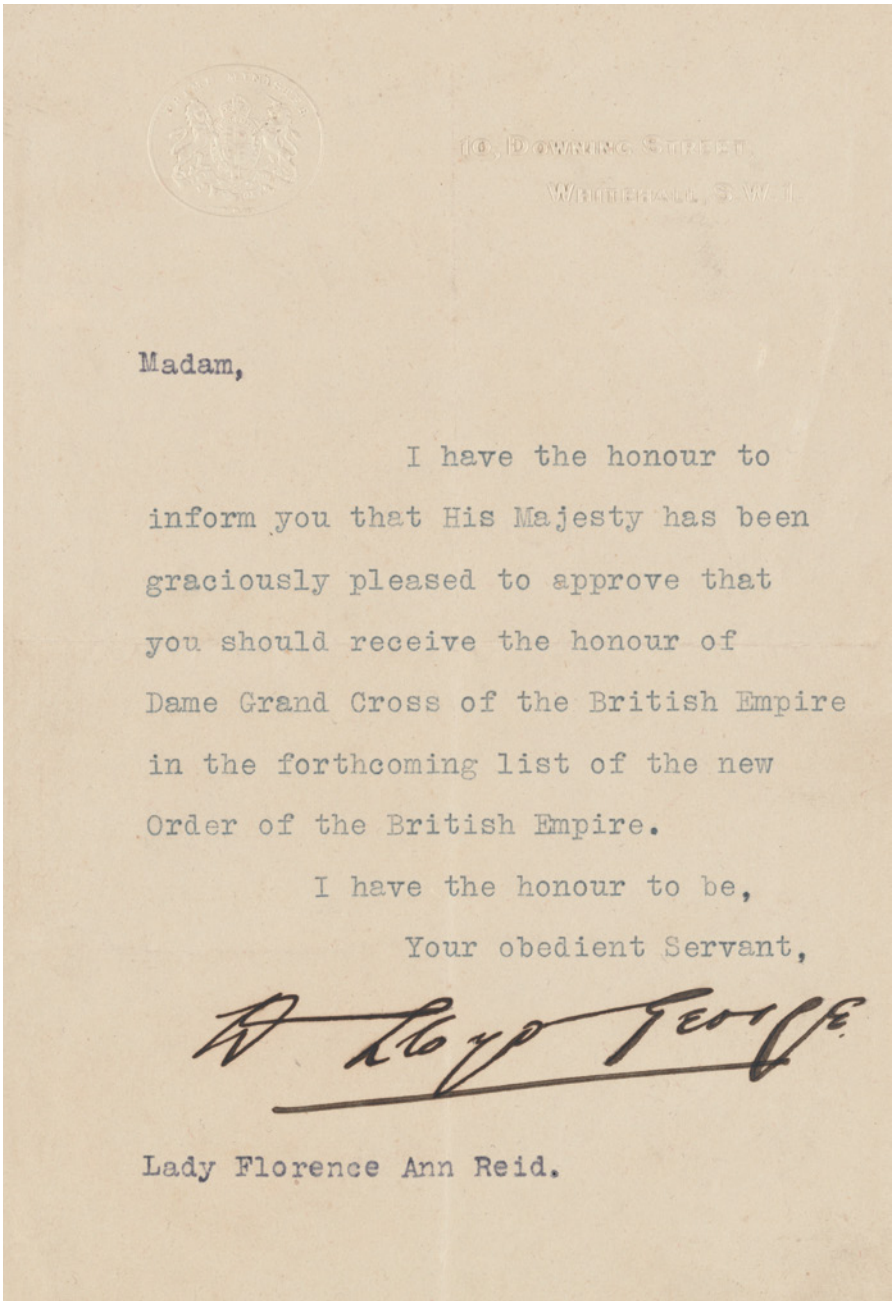
In Chicago in September 1912, the Reids were a celebrity couple, and Flora no shrinking violet. She was at her most engaging when, interviewed by the *Chicago Examiner*, she expressed first-wave feminist praise for the 'lack of domesticity' of American women:

> America women are blazing the way in customs which will do away with the idea that a woman is by nature a clinging vine, a dependent creature, subject to the whims of her husband … We of England and Australia are prone to comment on the fact that American women are so often seen without their husbands. They travel and dine alone. We say that American husbands are careless. The truth is that American women are learning independence and self-possession and we love them for it … I have been quoted as being opposed to women's suffrage, but I have made no such statement. That is a political issue in your country, and I refuse to take any part in the controversy.[130]

The always glamorous Lady Flora Reid was an asset to London's social set of the wealthy and well-known.



Throughout her adult life, Lady Flora produced different versions of her date of birth in Longford (near Cressy), Tasmania, as well as different spellings of her maiden name. Her birth certificate states that she was born 'Flora Ann Brumby' on 10 November 1867, yet in London's 1911 census she gave her age as 40 when in fact she was 43 or 44. In her 1924 passport, she gave her name as Lady 'Florence' Reid/nee 'Bromby' (curiously acquiring the surname of a past Anglican bishop in Tasmania), and her date of birth as 9 November 1877 – carving a full decade off her real age!



10, Downing Street,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

Madam,

I have the honour to inform you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve that you should receive the honour of Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire in the forthcoming list of the new Order of the British Empire.

I have the honour to be,
Your obedient Servant,

D Lloyd George

Lady Florence Ann Reid.

In recognition of Flora Reid's outstanding charity work in Britain from the time of her arrival in early 1910 and, later, her war fund-raising efforts, King George V awarded her a GBE, a Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

Enclosure.

ST. JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

9 APR 1918
LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE

Madame

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a Warrant under The King's Sign Manual granting you the Dignity of a Dame Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, the receipt of which I would ask you to be so good as to acknowledge on the attached Form.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient Servant,

Douglas Dawson
Colonel

Dame Flora Reid

Registrar and Secretary.

Like her mother, Thelma Reid had a keen sense of contemporary fashion, as this photograph taken in the 1940s indicates.

When a *Chicago Daily News* journalist tried to coax her to elaborate on the fact that, despite her admiration for the social and cultural advances made by American women, they still had not secured the franchise, she sensed tomorrow's mischievous front page headline, and took care not to compromise her husband's political work with comments that might be construed as inflammatory:

> I am the wife of a representative of the British government, and as such I have no right to take part, even though I cared to, in the cause of women's suffrage …[131]

The inner strength of the Reids' relationship served them well during the four years of upheaval and horror, 1914–18, when Great Britain and its Empire were at war with the German Empire. In ways mutually supportive, they dedicated themselves to what George described as the 'splendid array of Australian soldiers' with whom they were from late 1914 in almost daily contact.[132] Prime Minister Fisher had famously stated that Australia would support Britain to the last man and the last shilling, and the Reids fully endorsed the sentiments.

On 18 August 1914, two weeks into the war, the office of the Australian High Commission announced that all Australians in London were invited to attend a meeting to establish an 'Australian War Contingent Association', the aim of which was to assist, wherever possible, the Australian Expeditionary Forces expected in Europe in the coming months. According to a report in the *British Australian* on 20 August 1914, the Association had been 'formed to hold out a loving hand to the valiant sons of the colonies, who were coming Home to fight for the Empire …'[133] Lady Reid was appointed as President of the Association's Ladies' Committee.

George Reid's support for the war (which if anything intensified as the killing fields of France and Belgium deteriorated into futile stalemate) needs some context. During the Boer War, about the time that Reid's years as New South Wales Premier were coming to an end, he made a speech in the Legislative Assembly questioning both the British Empire's motives for the war and the impetuous Australian colonial enthusiasm for the conflict. At one point he maintained that 'Australians here do not want to be meddling in all the great wars of Empire'.[134] In making this assertion, he placed himself in a small minority of those in public life willing to question the political decisions from London which affected the colonies.

Some years later, when Reid gave a speech in the Reichstag Building in Berlin on 15 May 1912, he concentrated mainly on the reasons why German migrants should make Australia their destination of choice, bombarding his audience with statistics about the southern continent's 'delightfully pure and enjoyable' climate, the recent Australian political union, the country's financial stability and its rapid industrial development. In the closing stages of the speech he turned his attention to the contemporary relationship enjoyed by 'Australians and Germans', praising 'the glorious history of the German race' and the quality of the German settlers in Australia, and, as he put it, devoutly wishing that 'your future greatness, and ours, too, will lie along the paths of peace'.[135]

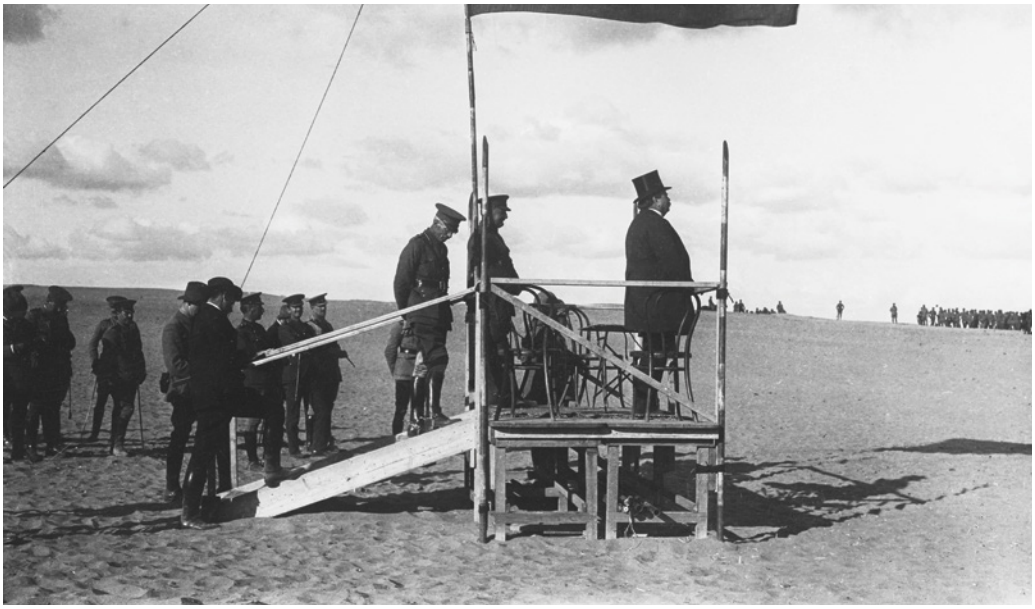
After stating that in his opinion the 'taste for aggressive warfare … is now opposed to modern sentiment', Reid concluded a lengthy address with a summary of the many benefits of a world at peace. He felt that Germany could play a key role in the attainment of such an altruistic goal:

> As the barriers erected by national ambition or fear or dislike crumbled away, more fertile fields for emulation would be opened up to the free-play of the combative forces of human nature, in the wider, nobler, more incessant struggles of ability and merit in the spheres of science, discovery, invention, industry, commerce. By such means advancing confidence, replacing fear, disarming suspicion, would bring feelings of friendly rivalry, thus advancing by leaps and bounds human progress and happiness. Germany will be great, whether in peace or war, but her best chance, I think, of conquering the world will come when the world opens her arms to the conquests of universal peace.[136]

The contrast between these sentiments and Reid's views in 1916, when he reassessed Germany in his autobiography, is stark. In *My Reminiscences* he reproduces a speech he delivered in London's Guildhall on 19 May 1915 when he utilised a variety of rhetorical strategies to appeal to the patriotism of the audience. It was barely disguised invective:

> One of the painful astonishments of the war is the strange ferocity so suddenly developed in the average German. It does seem to justify what some said of him – that from his cradle to his grave he is such a creature of authority that he will do anything which anything in a uniform tells him to. (Laughter.) Last year I was a member of an Anglo–German Friendship Society. It seems ages ago. I was such a lover of peace that I laid hands on every International Peace Society I could find. I am now more than ever a lover of Peace. (Cheers.) But the only sort of Peace Society I will ever join now is one pledged by a solemn bond to teach a lesson that will endure unto the third and fourth generation of those who repay chivalry with murder.[137]

The Guildhall speech, after which Reid informs us the 'great audience leapt to their feet and cheered', was not his finest moment. He and Flora were at their best when attending to the health and morale of the Australian soldiers. Reid insisted on spending Christmas 1914 in Egypt, arriving in Cairo on Christmas Eve with his son Clive, who acted as his private secretary. The ageing former Prime Minister was popular wherever he went, known to most of the Australians he met either personally or through the countless caricatures drawn by the likes of 'Hop' or David Low in the *Bulletin*. The soldiers felt they knew him as a reliable, familiar voice from their distant home, and he did not let them down.



When High Commissioner Reid insisted on joining the Australian troops in Egypt over Christmas 1914, his speeches to various groups were not forgotten. The old pro knew what to say and how to say it. His audiences loved his mix of empathy and humour and, most of all, his familiar voice. Favouring the top hat, he mixed easily with soldiers and their commanders alike, including Colonel HG Chauvel, General Sir John Maxwell and Duntroon's Brigadier General William Throsby Bridges. These photographs have a haunting quality, the stark desert setting both ominous and surreal.

Reid's speeches in Egypt were full of characteristic warmth and humour, a tonic for his appreciative audience of Australian and New Zealand troops. In one memorable address he gave to 8,000 soldiers of the Australian First Division, he merged an understanding of what he saw as his personal mission with the task confronting the Anzac soldiers. Reid's carefully chosen words struck a chord:

> Many anxious mothers have implored me to look after their sons … The Pyramids – the youngest of these august Pyramids was built 2,000 years before our Saviour was born – have been silent witnesses to many strange events, but I do not think that they could ever have looked down upon so unique a spectacle as this splendid array of Australian soldiers massed to defend them … Do not forget the distant homes that love you. Do not forget the fair fame and stainless honour of Australia committed to your keeping … Shall the hands of Fate point backward to universal chaos or forward to everlasting peace? Backward they must not, shall not, go. It is impossible. True culture, crowned with chivalry and good faith, will prove too strong once more for savage tricks and broken faith. May God be with you, each and all, until we meet again![138]

War historian Charles Bean, in the process of writing his own name into the mythology of his country, was an eye witness to this speech. His report, published in the *Age* newspaper on 27 January 1915, notes that the crowd of young faces was 'intent on every word'. Reid's consummate skills on the gaslit podiums of Sydney before Federation were clearly an asset for him at Cairo's forbidding sand venues. Bean predicted that the speech he was privileged to hear 'will live in history longest' because of its 'classic style', but also because

> Time and place made no alteration in the High Commissioner – it was the same familiar figure that Australians know – the tall hat, the eye-glass, the frock-coat, one hand on the rail, the other raised against the Pyramids, and the blue sky …[139]

Reid's biographer alerts us to an important yet overlooked result of Reid's Christmas speeches in Egypt for the Anzac troops:

> … the publicity which his visit inevitably received served to make up for the failure of people in England actually to see the men who had come across the world to join in the Empire's war. Without the visit the newspapers which moulded British public opinion might well have ignored them; as it was the press romanticized them, made for them in England an image which, rough diamonds as so many of them were, they would never have won for themselves while on leave in London from training camps on Salisbury Plain. There is a sense in which George Reid laid the foundations of the legend of the Australian soldier which was to flourish for a generation in the writings of men as diverse as Masefield and John Buchan.[140]

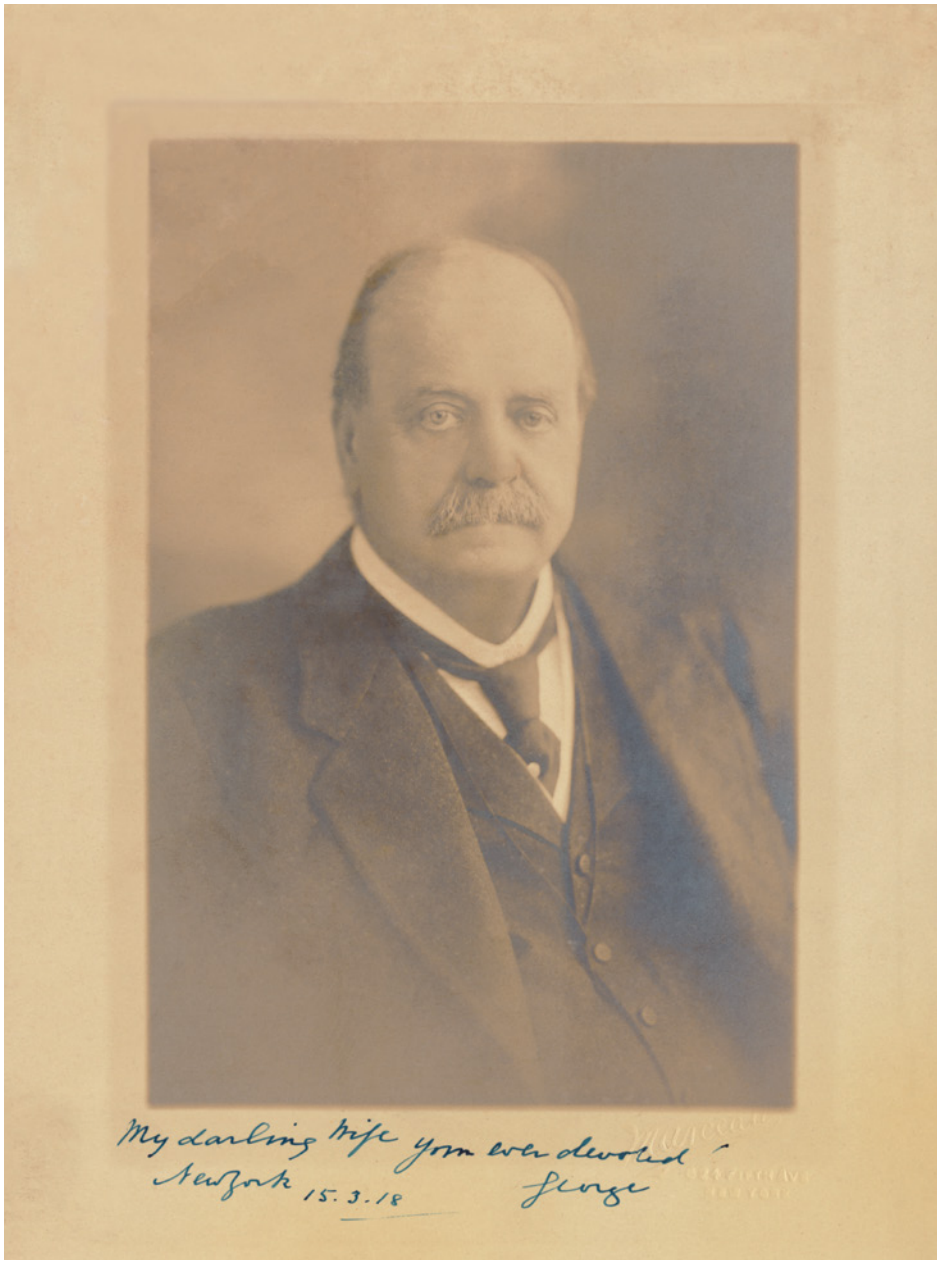
Most historical accounts of the Anzac Legend begin with the Englishmen Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's London *Telegraph* report on Gallipoli, published in Australian newspapers on 8 May 1915. Charles Bean's first report appeared a week later in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Reportage of Reid in Egypt in December 1915 and January 1916 arguably produced the first foundation of Anzac myth-making, some months before the landing at Suvla Bay.

Flora Reid applied herself with diligence to her war work. As reported in the *Times* in 1915, her contribution to a specially formed committee with the wife of the Australian Governor-General, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, was typical. Together with a number of other high-profile women, she shared responsibility for the distribution of remittances specially allocated to sick and wounded Australian soldiers. Flora also had a prominent role in the 'Vegetable Days' organised by the Women's Auxiliary Force, the aim of the project being to secure fresh vegetables for the wounded, especially during the cold winter months.

For what was officially described as Lady Reid's 'Special service in connection with Australian Forces', in 1917 she was awarded a GBE, a Dame Grand Cross. She was one of five recipients of the new award, categorised as the highest order of the British Empire available to women. Husband George, tireless in his duties and war work despite deteriorating health, was made a Knight of the Order of the Bath, with the rare distinction of the Grand Cross.[141]

George Reid's popularity in Australia was if anything eclipsed by the stature he attained in England and Scotland in his years as High Commissioner, and after. Political, social, scientific, cultural, financial, sporting or Western Front audiences and crowds – it made no difference to a man who found new resources of energy when called on to perform work for his nation and Empire, mostly work that had no precedents.

The twilight

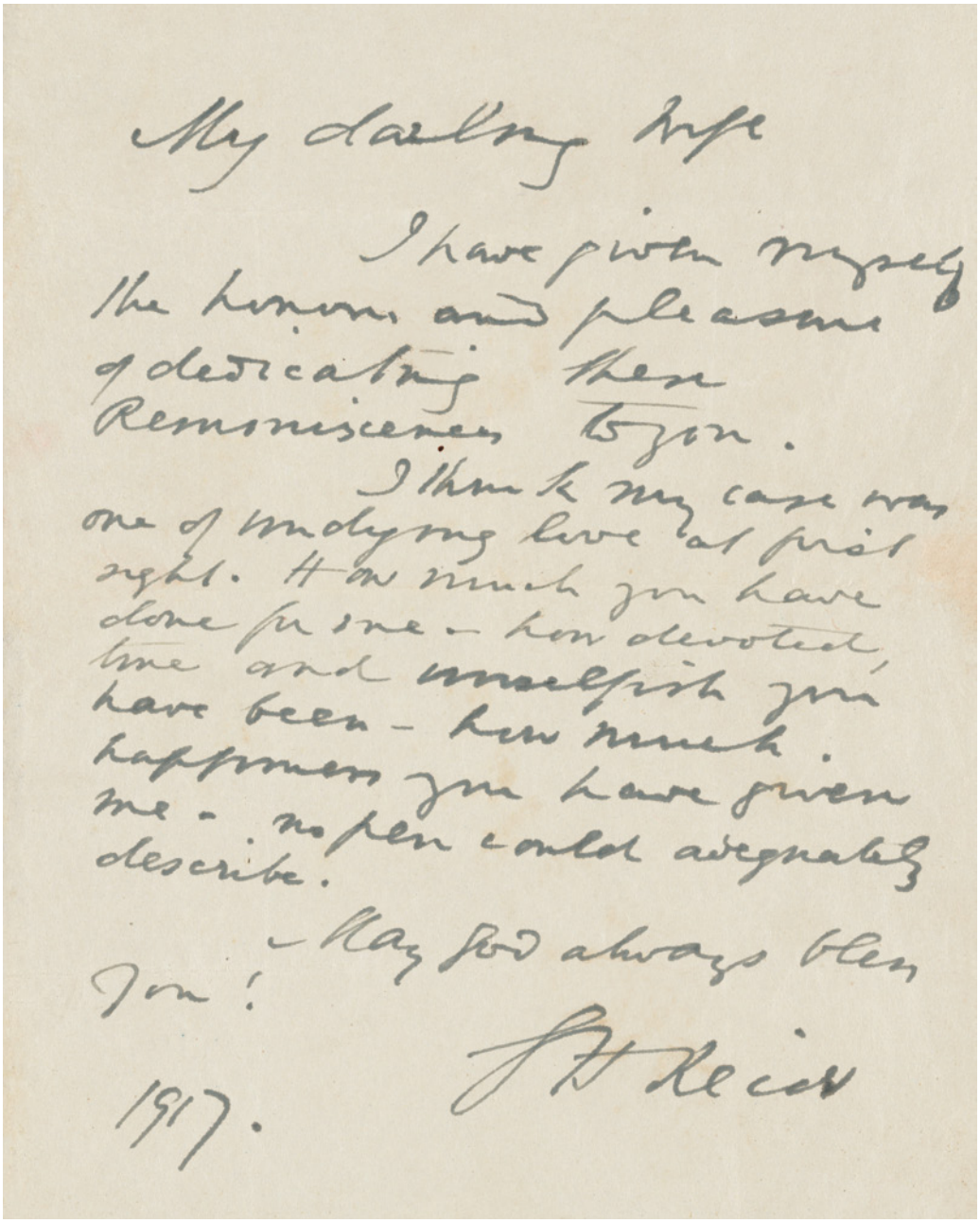


This postcard, sent by Reid to Flora, was written barely six months before his death.

Even before Reid finished as High Commissioner on 21 January 1916, to be replaced by former Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, a number of his well-credentialled British friends made sure that he was not lost to the world of politics. He was invited to stand for the prestigious House of Commons seat of St George's, Hanover Square, and, describing himself as an 'independent Imperialist', was duly elected unopposed. Reid was attracted to the challenge of yet another demanding role, though in hindsight he should have paid greater attention to his health. He continued to ignore worrying signs of heart and blood circulation trouble. Refusing to be diverted, he took his seat in the House of Commons, became President of the Royal Humane Society, accepted several directorships of companies, and agreed to deliver an overload of speeches for a number of war fund-raisers, charitable causes and cultural organisations. He also began the autobiography (an inexplicably tame and ponderous volume referred to earlier) which took time but did him no favours. The most engaging detail about the book involves its back story. Having dedicated it to his wife, Reid sent Flora a note more eloquent and deeply personal than anything in the volume itself:

> My darling wife, I have given myself the honour and pleasure of dedicating these reminiscences to you. I think my case was one of undying love at first sight. How much you have done for me – how devoted, true and unselfish you have been – how much happiness you have given me – no pen could adequately describe. May God always bless you![142]

In the upright manner of the era, the doting husband signed his intimate note, 'G. H. Reid'.



My darling Wife

I have given myself the honour and pleasure of dedicating these Reminiscences to you.

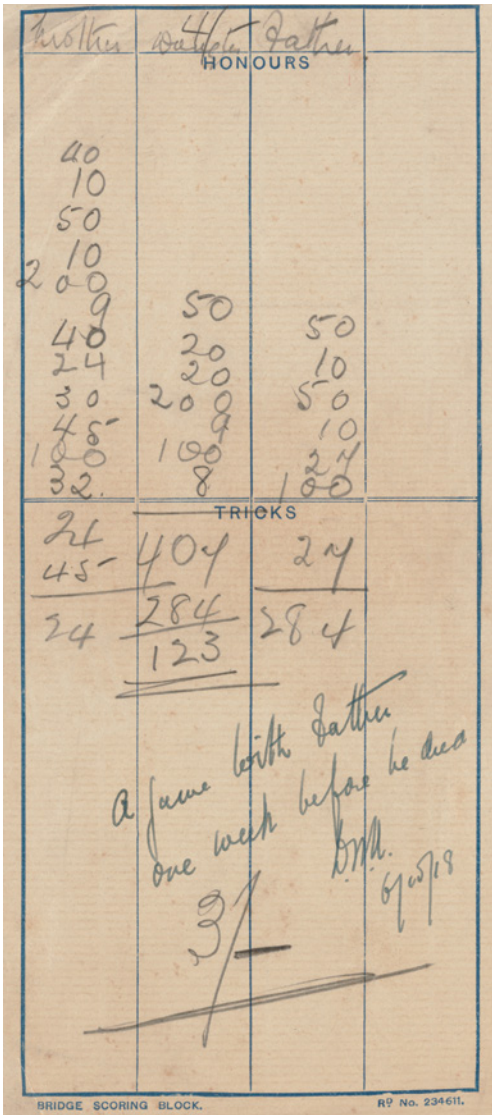
I think my case was one of undying love at first sight. How much you have done for me – how devoted, true and unselfish you have been – how much happiness you have given me – no pen could adequately describe.

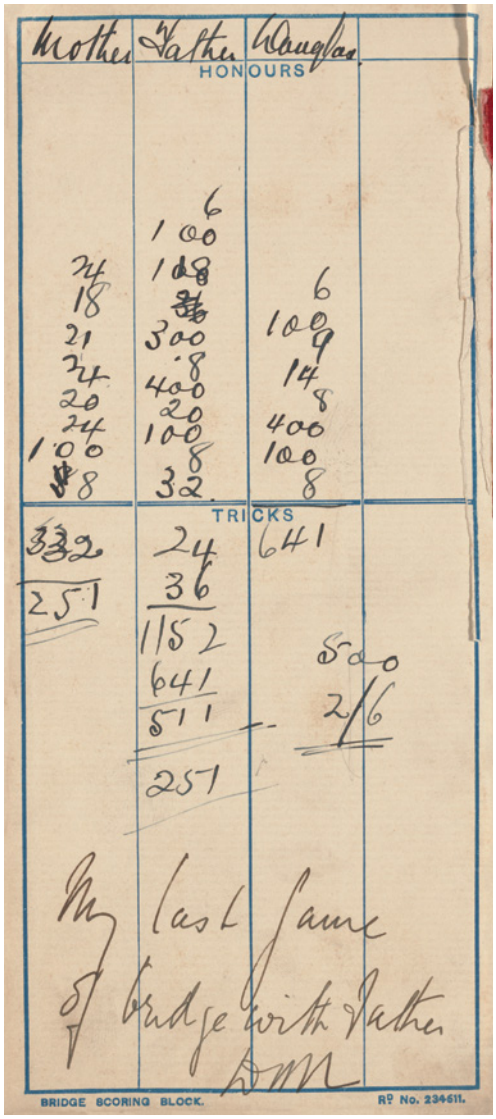
– May God always bless You!

J. H. Reid

1917.

The deep love and affection within the Reid family is reflected in these treasured family items – the dedication to Flora of George's *Reminiscences*; and son Douglas' determination to keep the score cards from the last bridge games he and his mother played with his ailing father. Flora ensured that upon her death, wherever and whenever that may occur, she would be finally laid to rest with her husband. She died in Sydney in 1950, and family members duly acted on her wishes. The gravesite today has no mention of the plot being shared by husband and wife, an oversight that needs to be addressed.


Mother
Father
Father
HONOURS
40
10
50
10
2009
40
24
30
45
100
32
50
20
200
209
9
100
8
50
10
50
10
27
100
TRICKS
24
45
24
404
284
123
27
284
A game with Father
one week before he died
BMH.
6/6/18
BRIDGE SCORING BLOCK.
Rd No. 234611.


Mother
Father
Douglas
HONOURS
6
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300
400
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100
8
32.
TRICKS
24
36
1152
641
511
257
641
500
2/6
My last game
of Bridge with Father
BMH
BRIDGE SCORING BLOCK.
Rd No. 234611.

No. 998

Wandsworth Borough Council.

1 al

BY VIRTUE of the powers conferred on Burial Boards by the Burial Acts, 1852 to 1906, to grant exclusive Rights of Burial, and of the provisions of the London Government Act, 1899, and the various schemes made thereunder, **We**, the MAYOR, ALDERMEN, and COUNCILLORS of the METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH, in the COUNTY OF LONDON (hereinafter named "The Council"), in consideration of the sum of — Ninety — pounds, ——— shillings, and ——— pence, to us paid by — Florence Reid (Lady) ——— of — 1 Melbury Road, Kensington ——— in the County of London — (the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged) **Do hereby grant** unto the said Florence Reid ——— and his/her heirs the exclusive Right of Burial in perpetuity in the grave space or vault No. 561 Block B Class A in the Consecrated portion of the ground at the PUTNEY VALE CEMETERY, situate at PUTNEY VALE, in the County of London. **To hold** the same unto and to the use of the said — Florence Reid — and his/her heirs and such of his/her and their assigns as the Council shall approve, subject to the Table of Fees and Payments fixed and settled by the Council now in force and to the regulations now in force or which may hereafter be made with regard to interments, and to the management, regulation and control of the said Cemetery, by the Local Government Board or by the Council or other competent authority.

Jas. Truscott & Son, Ltd., London.

We hereby certify that this grant of right of burial does not form part of a larger transaction or of a series of transactions in respect of which the amount or value, or the aggregate amount or value, of the consideration exceeds five hundred pounds.

Given under our Common Seal this — Twenty-first — day of — October — One Thousand Nine Hundred and eighteen —

gre

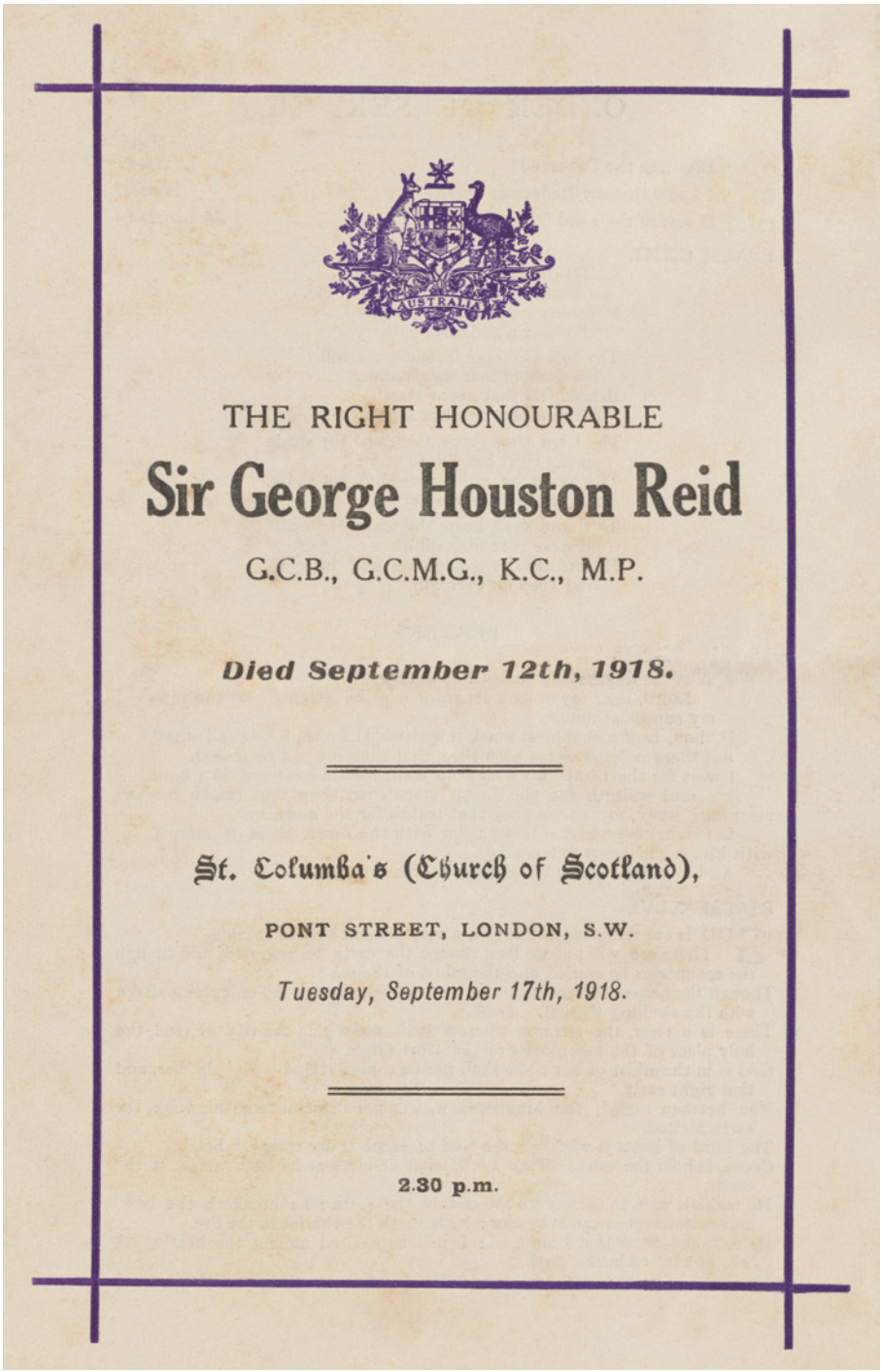
The Common Seal of the Council was hereunto affixed by order of the Council in the presence of

1/ ad/ 1359

Town Clerk.

Reid also undertook another trip to the United States in the winter of 1917–18, this time without the comforting presence of his wife by his side. The tour was designed solely to raise funds for the war effort at a particularly precarious time for Britain and her allies. Describing the trip as 'self-imposed', Reid bore at least some of the expense himself.[143] Unfortunately, he fell ill with pneumonia in St Louis in February 1918 and had to cancel all later engagements. Perhaps it was a feeling of vulnerability due to a growing list of ailments or the length of his overseas absence, or both, but when he was at a particularly low point in New York in March he sent Flora a photo of himself inscribed at the bottom: 'My darling wife … your ever devoted George'.[144] Maybe he realised then that he had entered life's twilight.

When he finally managed to return to Flora and the family in London, Reid bucked up a little, no doubt buoyed by the flood of well-wishers wanting to visit or send on notes of affection and support. The family kept many of them. There was another relapse in early April, followed by a short rally in the summer months, before Reid finally succumbed to a brain haemorrhage on 12 September 1918. The big body of a giant of early Australian politics had called it a day.



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

Sir George Houston Reid

G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C., M.P.

Died September 12th, 1918.

St. Columba's (Church of Scotland),

PONT STREET, LONDON, S.W.

Tuesday, September 17th, 1918.

2.30 p.m.

Form of Service for Reid's funeral, held on 17 September 1918 at St Columba's Church of Scotland in Pont Street, central London.

Smiles of angels

Part of the large crowd gathered outside St Columba's Church, with Reid's coffin about to commence the journey to its final resting place at Putney Vale Cemetery, Wandsworth.

The funeral service of the Right Honourable Sir George Houstoun Reid GCB, GCMG, Hon DCL (Oxon), Hon LLD (Adelaide), KC, took place at St Columba's Church of Scotland in Pont Street, London, on 17 September 1918, less than two months before the cessation of hostilities in the Great War. There was a large crowd of mourners, many of whom took part in the procession to Putney Vale cemetery where Reid was laid to rest. Pall-bearers at the funeral included Prime Minister Billy Hughes and his deputy, former Prime Minister Joseph Cook, both in London for the Imperial War Conference, former Prime Minister Andrew Fisher (the second High Commissioner), Sir Robert Garran, former Australian Governor-General Lord Thomas Denman, Lord Blyth and Lord Grey.[145]

Reid would have appreciated the Rev Archibald Fleming, who conducted the service, referring to him 'an essential Scot', and he would have liked even more the fact that his burial took place in the presence of a guard of honour of Australian soldiers – men with whom, in the several previous years, he and his wife had struck up a tight bond forged under the most demanding circumstances.

Reid would also have approved of the choice of hymns at his service. Psalm 100, the 'Old Hundredth', was sung, just as it had been on 12 March 1913 on Capital Hill, Canberra, at the Foundation Stones and Naming ceremony for the new Australian capital city. Reid had played a prominent role in the choice of site. Another hymn sung by the congregation was Cardinal Newman's standard, 'Lead Kindly Light', the last lines of which read:

> So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on,
>
> O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,
>
> and with the morn those angel faces smile,
>
> which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

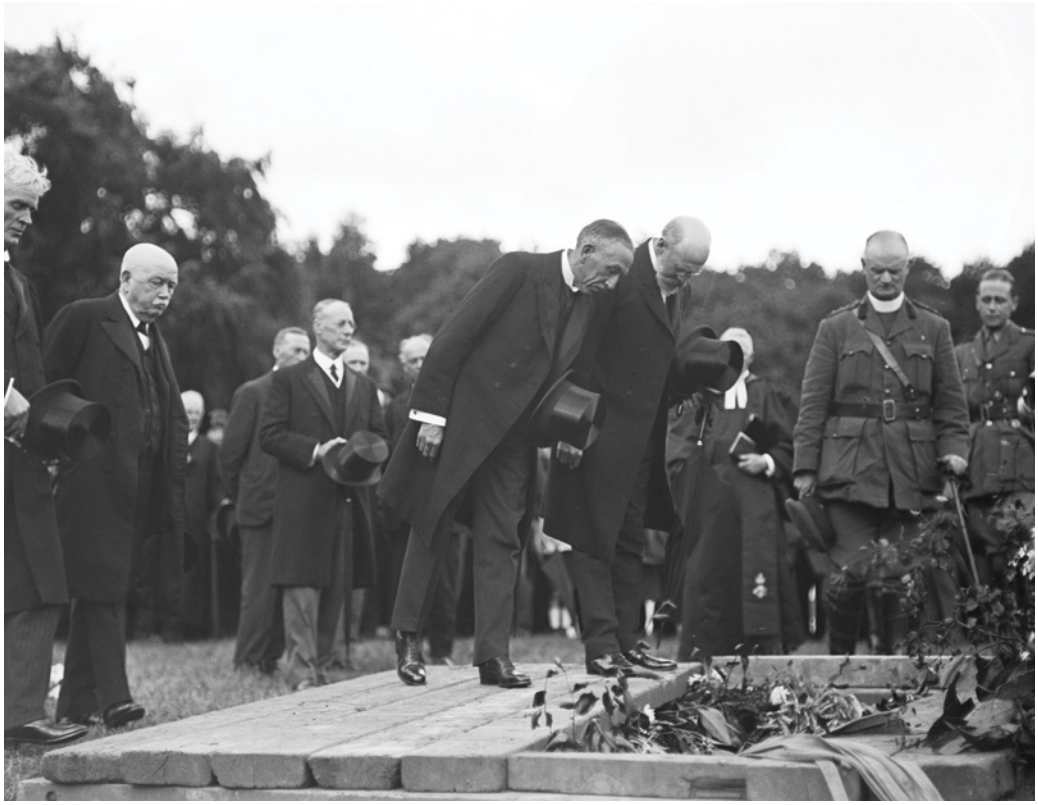
In life, Reid defied the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Never lacking optimism, he kept his focus steadily on improving social conditions for all sections of society. He was not a religious man; rather, he believed that it was within the capacity of humankind to ensure that the forces for good triumphed over the forces of evil. Like his father had before him, Reid laboured for a better world.

Less than a month after her husband's death Flora Reid paid the Wandsworth Borough Council the sum of £90 to ensure that, upon her death, she would be buried with her husband at Putney Vale.[146] Despite returning to live in Australia for well over 20 years after George's death, when she died on 1 September 1950 her ashes were taken back to England where she was interred with her beloved partner. Yet a visit to the cemetery today reveals no change to the original inscription text on the gravesite, and what we have is itself misleading:

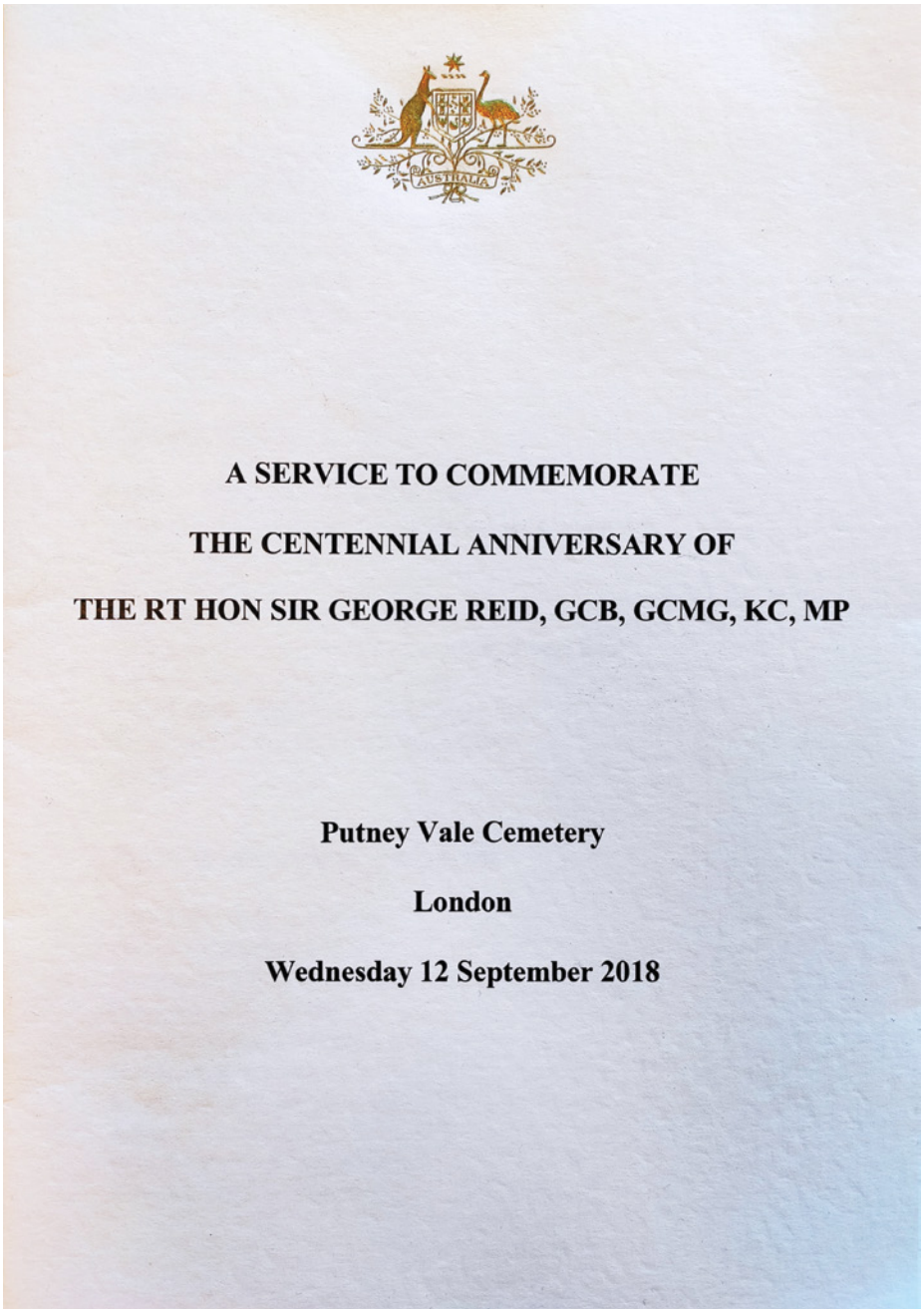
To The Glory of God and in Pious Memory of
The Right Hon. Sir George Houstoun Reid,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C., D.C.L., L.L.D., M.P.
Premier of New South Wales 1894–99.
One of the Framers of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia.
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia 1904–5.
First High Commissioner in London 1910–16.
Born 25th February 1845 – Died 12th September 1918.
This monument was erected by the British Empire League
on behalf of his friends and admirers.[147]

Reid's life is reduced virtually to an Empire footnote. Sadly, there is no mention at all of Flora. The site and the headstone's biographical information need to be updated, expanded to address the conspicuous absences. Hopefully this might occur in the near future in co-operation with family members.

Reid's gravesite today. The dedication tomb, designed by celebrated Australian sculptor, Sir Bertram Mackennal, was unveiled in 1922.

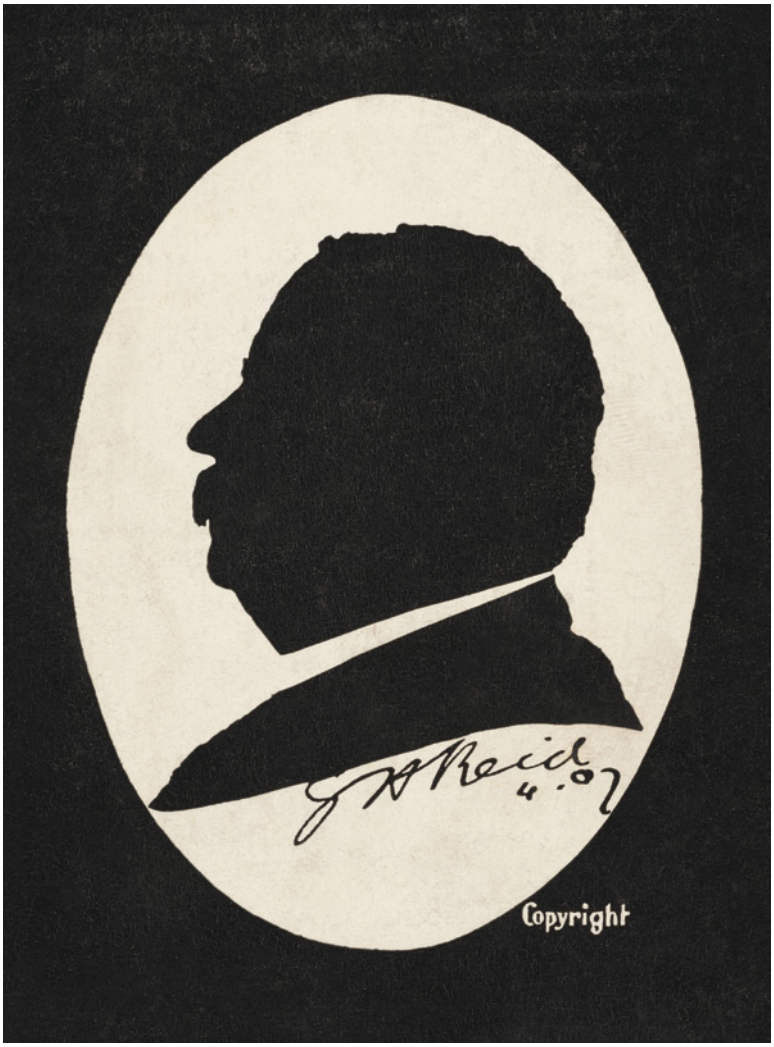


Burial of Sir George Reid at Putney Vale Cemetery, 17 September 1918. Prime Minister Billy Hughes and his deputy Joseph Cook pay their last respects. Former Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, Australia's fifth Prime Minister and second High Commissioner, can just be seen in the extreme left of picture. Unlike the belligerent Hughes and the serviceable Cook, Fisher was undone by the shocking carnage of the Great War. By the end of the conflict, his hair had turned snow white.



Program for the centenary service at Putney Vale Cemetery, held on 12 September 2018, a special commemorative event organised by the Australian High Commission and the Australian Studies Institute (ANU).

A great and good man



Silhouette of George Reid, 1907.

George Reid demands our attention for a political, cultural and diplomatic career, a brimming life, that mattered: his leadership skills; his central role in the achievement of Australian Federation; his unswerving commitment to social justice; his adherence to a set of moral principles that guided him throughout life; and his concern always to help people in difficulties, whether downtrodden constituents knocking on his door, struggling cultural organisations looking for a leg up or English peers of the realm seeking his wise advice.

Alfred Deakin and, some decades later, another Victorian, Professor Manning Clark, regarded the corpulent New South Welshman as inclined to vulgarity.[148] Yet the weight of testimony from friend and foe alike suggests quite the opposite. Praise for Reid came from a wide range of individuals who knew him as a colleague, a boss or simply as a friend. One member of his High Commission staff, keen to go on the record, stated that 'Everyone in the office … would go through fire and water for him', while his secretary when he was Prime Minister regarded him as 'a gentleman by training and association'.[149]

Tributes during Reid's life and after reveal different versions of these same sentiments, none more transparently credible than the praise accorded him by the first generation of Labor politicians. The party's hardest heads admired and respected his fundamental decency.

Even as he schemed to end Reid's productive era as New South Wales Premier, the enigmatic Billy Hughes, having called him 'the most democratic premier we have had yet', added a telling point of detail: while the Labor Party was not always satisfied with Reid, the tough-minded realist in Hughes understood that Reid achieved to the limit of what was politically attainable.[150]

After Reid died, key Labor men recalled their relationship with him over some 30 years. Committed Victorian unionist Frank Tudor, a long-time federal politician, spoke from the heart:

> Although I differed from him practically the whole of the time he was in politics, I sincerely regret the death of Sir George Reid, for I always found him a fair opponent … He always tried to do the thing he thought was right without considering whether it would be popular.[151]

Andrew Fisher agreed, expressing his admiration in a note he penned to his grieving widow:

> Few public men fought so well for the views he held and remained a genial friend of those who were strenuously opposing him … I have the most pleasant recollections of your late and most distinguished husband. There is no joy sterling manhood feels like a contest with the brave and true.[152]

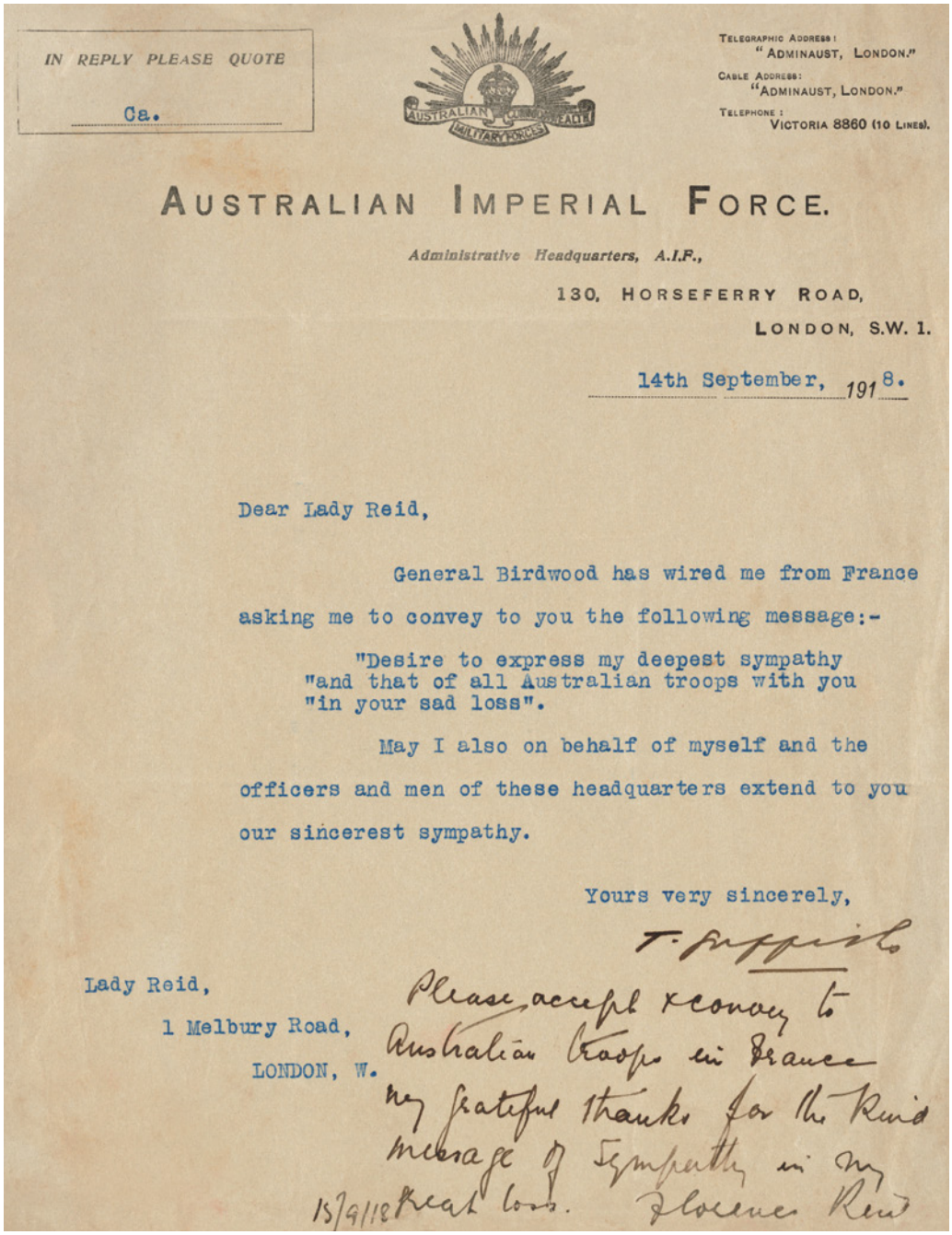
But again it was Hughes who produced an epitaph for Reid with cutting edge when he remembered an era of fortunes won and lost, and an old-style politician from the other side who refused to compromise his integrity:

> He came to NSW politics with clean hands and kept them clean. A Minister who never owned a share in a public company, who never trafficked in land, and who, without extravagance, was always poor and yet never so poor as to be subject to financial pressure.[153]

Reid's estate supported Hughes' observation. He left a tidy though modest £8340 to his wife and family.

Perhaps the most subtle assessment of George Reid came from an unexpected source, Queen Alexandra. In a touching note to her friend Lady Reid, on a card attached to a cross of red roses, she wrote: 'To the memory of a great and good man'.[154] In one brushstroke, she grasped the enduring significance of Reid's public and private lives.

Walking stick gifted to Reid in March 1917 by his good friend David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1916–22.



IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

Ca.

AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH MILITARY FORCES

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"ADMINAUST, LONDON."
CABLE ADDRESS:
"ADMINAUST, LONDON."
TELEPHONE:
VICTORIA 8860 (10 LINES).

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F.,
130, HORSEFERRY ROAD,
LONDON, S.W. 1.

14th September, 1918.

Dear Lady Reid,

General Birdwood has wired me from France asking me to convey to you the following message:-

"Desire to express my deepest sympathy
"and that of all Australian troops with you
"in your sad loss".

May I also on behalf of myself and the officers and men of these headquarters extend to you our sincerest sympathy.

Yours very sincerely,

T. Bridges

Lady Reid,
1 Melbury Road,
LONDON, W.

Please accept & convey to Australian troops in France my grateful thanks for the kind message of sympathy in my great loss. Florence Reid
15/9/18

Heartfelt condolence letters to Lady Flora Reid from General William Birdwood (on behalf of the troops under his command), former Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and Prime Minister Billy Hughes.

TELEPHONE:
CITY 1740.

HIGH COMMISSIONER,
AUSTRALIA HOUSE,
STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2.

Sept. 12th, 1918.

Dear Lady Reid,

The sad news of the death of your distinguished husband, though not wholly unexpected since his severe attack of illness, is painful news to many who have been associated with him in the public life of Australia.

Few public men fought
so well for the views
he held and remained
a genial friend of
those who were strenuously
opposing them.
A great Australian
statesman has passed
away and we are
all the poorer today.
To you whose loss is
greater than all the others
on Mrs Fisher's and in
my own behalf I convey
our sympathy in your bereavement
and hope that you may
have health & strength to
sustain you in your days of
sorrow. Yours faithfully
Andrew Fisher

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PRIME MINISTER

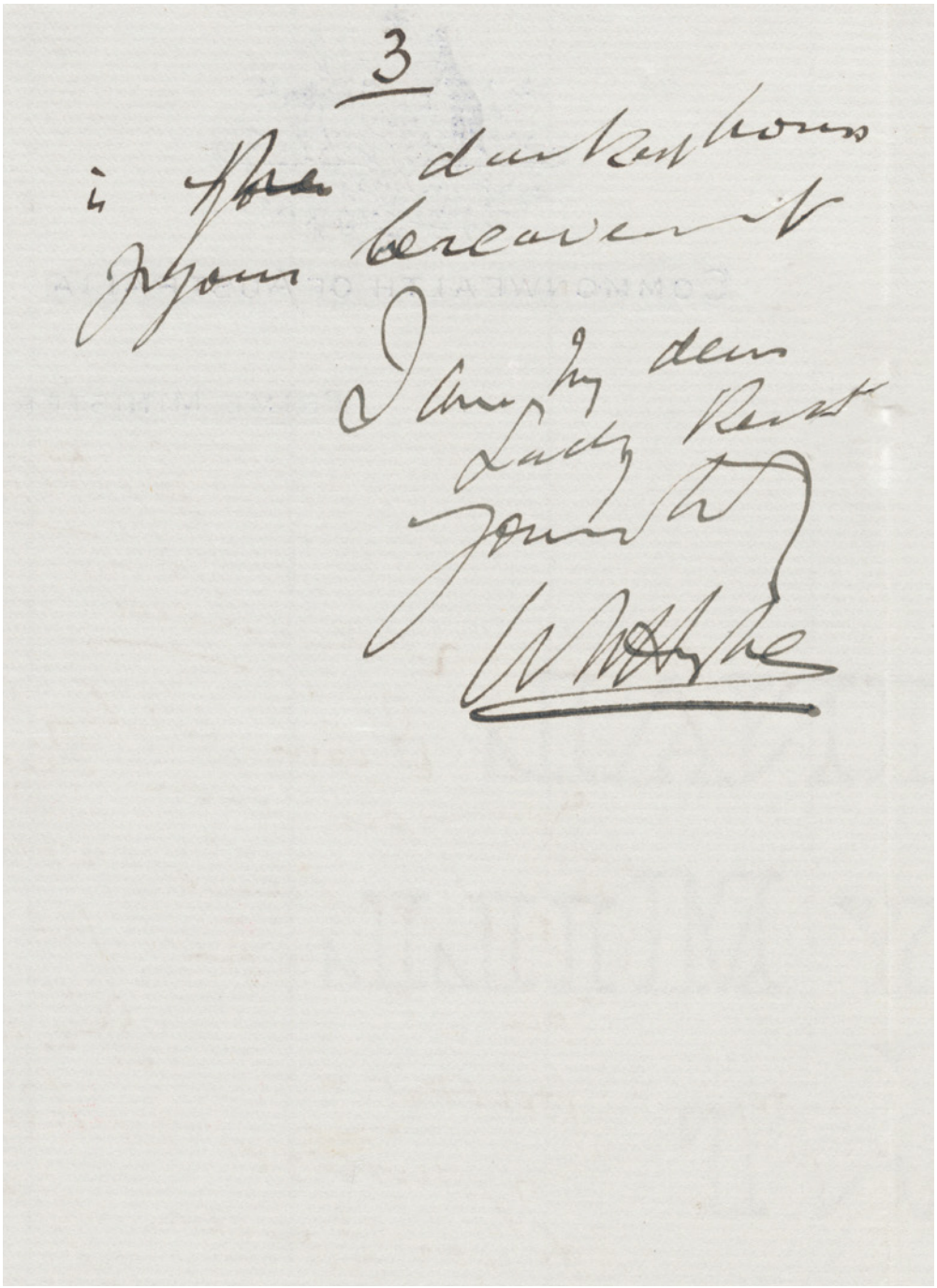
Sept 7th/18

My dear Lady Reid

I am writing to let you know deeply I sympathise with you - your great sorrow & Hers & Ronas my privilege & work under you distinguished husband. Hes name will

always be associated
with Australian history:
He played a part
part in the creation
of the Commonwealth
and the public
life of the State of
N.S.W.

On behalf of
the Government
people of Australia
I tender you
deepest sympathy
and trust that God
will sustain you



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page 53: ‘The Federal Works’, CW Readett, 1898?, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-135578526; [Sir George Reid], Charles Nuttall, 190-?, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-135578369

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page 65: 4th Commonwealth Government from 19th August 1904 to 4th July 1905, Swiss Studios, Melbourne, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-137248591

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Endnotes

1 This volume, first published by Robertson and Mullins in 1944, has been republished twice since, in slightly different versions, the first under the editorship of JA La Nauze in 1963, and the second in 1995, a volume which includes an Introduction by its editor, Stuart Macintyre. References in this monograph to Deakin's *The Federal Story* can be located in the 1963 volume by Prof La Nauze: *The Federal Story–The Inner History of the Federal Cause 1880–1900*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville (Victoria), 1963. Hereafter, *Federal Story*.

2 Deakin, *Federal Story*, pp. 62–3.

3 See [Sir] Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*, Vol. II, 1892, repr. Books for Libraries Press, New York, 1971, p. 373; BR Wise, 'The Commonwealth of Australia', *The National Review*, July 1899; BR Wise, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1899–1900*, Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1913, p. 146.

4 See 'John English', *'Reid the Wriggler' or the False Prophet of Freetrade*, TJ Houghton & Co., 1895.

5 WG McMinn, *George Reid*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Victoria), 1989, Introduction, p. 1.

6 ibid., p. 277.

7 AB Piddington, 'Australiana–George Reid', *The Forum*, 7 November 1923, p. 16.

8 WM Hughes, *New South Wales Legislative Assembly*, Governor's Speech, Address in Reply, 23 June 1898, p. 142.

9 See McMinn, op. cit., p. 187. The observation was made by the respected if controversial South Australian federal politician, Patrick McMahon Glynn.

10 LF Crisp, *George Houstoun Reid–Federation father. Federal failure?*, SOPAC Printery, ANU, Canberra, 1979, p. 4.

11 See McMinn, op. cit., p. 3.

12 AGS [AG Stephens], *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1910; Ann Fairbairn, 'The High Commissioner', *Quadrant*, No.123, Vol. XXI, No.10, October 1977, p. 68.

13 See [George] Reid Papers, National Library of Australia, MSS 2242, Box 1, Red album, p. 41.

14 [Rt Hon] GH Reid, 'How I Prepare My Speeches', *Life*, 15 January 1904, p. 52.

15 See David Headon, *Alfred Deakin (1856–1919) Australia's Second Prime Minister–the Lives, the Legacy, Australian Parliamentary Library*, Canberra, 2018, pp. 22–3.

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17 See [Rt Hon Sir] George Reid, *My Reminiscences*, Cassell and Company Ltd, London, 1917, pp. 2–3; Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 49.

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One side of the entry gate to Reid House, Queanbeyan, residence of Ursula Reid, third wife of Keith Reid (one of George Reid's grandchildren).

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