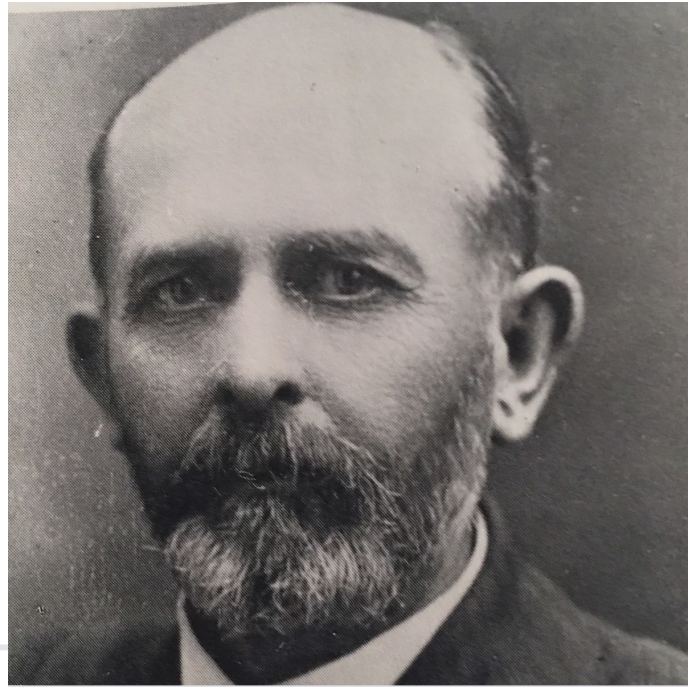


Reekie, Frederick William (1863–1938), and Marion (Lowrie) (1863–1934)



Frederick William Reekie

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

W. GLYNN LITSTER

W. Glynn Litster, Ph.D. (The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia), retired in 1994. Litster was born in Melbourne, Australia, and served as an educator and missionary in the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. His roles included teacher, principal, school supervisor, and education director. Late in his career he researched the

history of Sanitarium. During retirement he produced Pacific Islands hymnbooks in 7 languages. He is married to Elva, has two adult children, 6 grandchildren, and 3 great grandchildren.

Fred and Marion Reekie were pioneer literature evangelists in the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. They worked in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria.

Early Years

Frederick William Reekie was born in London, England, on November 27, 1863,¹ the second of six children. He was trained as a gardener at Kew Gardens before migrating to Victoria, Australia, with his uncle, Ainslie Reekie. Ainslie made early contact with the group of Seventh-day Adventists who had arrived in Australia from America in 1885, and after a visit with his uncle early in 1889 in Coburg, Victoria, Fred began to keep the Sabbath² toward the end of 1889, Fred commenced canvassing under Pastor Michaels³ with books that were being printed at the Bible Echo Publishing House in North Fitzroy, Victoria.⁴

One of the first converts from the second Adventist evangelistic meetings at Ballarat in Australia was Marion Lowrie, who was born in Hamilton, Victoria, on September 22, 1863. After her mother died, her father married again. A few years after this second marriage, her father was killed in a rail shunting accident at the Hamilton

station. Because there were half brothers and sisters to be cared for, Marion moved to Ballarat and found work as a domestic servant. While there, she became a Seventh-day Adventist and then moved to Adelaide, South Australia, as a Bible worker.⁵ When she returned to Victoria, she commenced canvassing in Melbourne. Within a short time, a friendship developed with colporteur Fred Reekie, and marriage followed on October 31, 1891. The couple continued canvassing in the Melbourne area.⁶

Years of Service

Church leadership quickly became aware of the value of a married couple who were both engaged in literature evangelism. In 1893, Fred and Marion were invited to establish the church in the colony of Western Australia by selling Adventist books and making contact with the people.⁷ Marion canvassed for a short period until their first child, Jessie, was born, in 1894.⁸ Mabel joined the family in 1895. Fred continued his canvassing, riding his bicycle on bush roads north to Geraldton,⁹ calling on all homes and studying the Bible in the evenings with those he stayed with. He traveled east to the newly developing goldfields at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie and through the southwest and south to Albany. There were few homes he did not visit. After six years,¹⁰ in 1899 the family moved back east¹¹ to the new Avondale School for Christian Workers in New South Wales, where Fred had been invited to serve as farm manager and steward.¹² However, Ellen White asked Fred to visit her at her home, "Sunnyside," and advised him the Lord had shown her that his place was in the canvassing work. In August 1900 Fred was invited to move to Brisbane, Queensland, as the general canvassing agent.¹³ He moved his family from Avondale to Brisbane.¹⁴ Another daughter was born in Brisbane, Jean Purves, on July 22, 1900. She died just four months later, on November 24. Because the humidity and heat in Brisbane were so great, Fred moved the family back to Cooranbong, New South Wales. By himself, he traveled back to Queensland and canvassed from Beaudesert in the south to Rockhampton, Mackay, Cairns, Mareeba, and Charters Towers in the far north, returning home periodically to be with the family, until 1902.¹⁵

In the second half of 1902 and then 1903 Fred turned his attention to Victoria, still leaving his family at Cooranbong.¹⁶ In the *Australasian Record*, it was reported that he sold books in Colac and Port Fairy in Western Victoria and in Mansfield and Rutherglen, northern Victoria. In 1904 he canvassed in New South Wales in towns closer to Cooranbong, including Muswellbrook, Stroud, Paterson, Gloucester, and Williams River. Early in 1905, Fred was promoting the sale of Ellen White's book *Christ's Object Lessons* in order to support a number of newly established elementary schools.¹⁷ On June 6, 1905, a son, Fred Balfour Lowrie, was born. He died 14 months later on August 25, 1906. Fred and Marion found this very difficult to cope with. They adopted another son, Clifton "Cliff," born on February 6, 1907.

Fred continued to work as a literature evangelist. In 1905 he had changed from canvassing books such as *Ladies Guide*, *Daniel and the Revelation*, *Home Hand Book*, and *Bible Readings* in order to promote the sale of *Christ's Object Lessons* in Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales, again returning home at convenient times.¹⁸ In

1914 he was invited to be the leader of the colporteur teams for the New South Wales Conference. He was given the title field mission secretary.¹⁹ This continued until the end of 1917, when he was invited to be the home missions secretary for the New South Wales Conference.²⁰ When the North New South Wales Conference was formed in 1920, Fred continued to serve as the home missions secretary for both conferences in New South Wales until 1925.

Later Years

In 1926 Fred accepted the position of a gardener at the Sydney Sanitarium, easing the burdens he had carried for so long.²¹ When his wife, Marion, became sick, Fred retired and cared for her until she died on January 24, 1934.²² He then decided to stay with his daughters. He stayed first with Mabel and then with Jessie, whose husband, William Litster, had been invited to Western Australia as the secretary-treasurer of the West Australian Conference.²³ He died on July 27, 1938, and was buried in the Karrakatta, Western Australia, cemetery.²⁴

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3. Ibid.
4. Unless otherwise credited, this article is written from the personal knowledge of the author, a grandson of William and Marion Reekie.
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