

**QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

**CHS 46**

**THE EMILY McRAE ARCHER COLLECTION**

**Women, Northern Tasmania  
Rural Life, Northern Tasmania**

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## INTRODUCTION

Emily McRae (1833-1877) arrived in Melbourne with her father, James Butler McRae, and younger sister Fanny aboard the *Roxburgh Castle* in 1853. Her mother had recently died and it was hoped that a better climate would improve the health of her consumptive sister. Sadly this was not to be, for 11 year old Fanny died in November of that year.

Later in the 1850s Emily and her father visited Tasmania where they sojourned at “Hagley House” and the Retreat Brewery, Deloraine. Emily returned to Tasmania early in 1859, staying for some months with Adolphus Frederick Rooke, farmer, brewer and Member of the House of Assembly, and his wife Susan Kinder Rooke (nee Archer) at their property “The Retreat”, near Deloraine. Mrs Rooke was the sister of Thomas Kentish Archer, soon to be Emily’s husband.

Emily (27) and Thomas (42) were married in Melbourne on 12 January 1860. They made their home at “The Retreat” (sometimes referred to as “Retreat Farm”), now the site of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. In a letter to her mother’s sister, Eliza Reed in England, dated 13 March 1860, Emily wrote that she was retaining McRae as part of her name.

James McRae came to live with Emily and Thomas not long after her marriage. After “The Retreat” was destroyed by a disastrous fire in October 1874, the family lived at “Quamby Plain”, Hagley.

Nine children were born to Emily and Thomas before her untimely and sudden death on 9 April 1877 at the age of 44. She was survived by her husband, three daughters and four sons. Her eldest daughter, Susan, known as Archie, was sent to school in Melbourne just three months before her mother’s death.

Emily and her aunt Eliza Reed maintained a regular correspondence for 25 years and these letters to and from Emily comprise most of the collection. The letters, most of them dated, cover Emily’s life from when she was a girl in England until the time of her death in Tasmania.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in May 1995 with an additional item donated in March 2002 (no. 20/2).

## *1. Correspondence*

### **Letters to Emily**

1	From mother, England (photocopy)	1843
2	From James Butler McRae (father), England, to Emily in England	1846-1852
3	From James Butler McRae (father), Victoria, to Emily in Melbourne and Tasmania	1857-1861
4/1	From Eliza Reed (aunt), England, to Emily in England and Melbourne	1853-1859, nd
4/2	From Eliza Reed (aunt), England, to Emily in Tasmania (letter dated 6 January 1860 wishes Emily “many returns of the day”)	1860-1867
4/3	From Eliza Reed (aunt), England, to Emily in Tasmania	1868-1877
5	From Emma Gill (friend), London, also undated letters (including joint letter with Amy Jeffries)	1854-1859
6	From Marianne Rooke (daughter of T K Archer’s sister Mrs Susan Rooke), Retreat, [near Deloraine] (letter dated 1 May (no year) mentions Emily staying at the Retreat Brewery some three years ago when she first arrived in Tasmania)	1856-1858
7	From Thomas Kentish Archer (husband-to-be and husband), Tasmania, to Emily in Melbourne and Tasmania	1859, 1868
8	From Louise McRae (cousin), London	1859
9	From Marion and ‘Pigmy’, (friends), “Crosby Lodge”, [Launceston] (for information on “Crosby Lodge” see Jenny Gill <i>The story of the Launceston Homoeopathic Hospital</i> , Launceston, 1990. The hospital’s first premises were in the former “Crosby Lodge”, owned by the Gilmore family. Letter from ‘Pigmy’ c December 1859 mentions “The Gilmores are talking of going to England”)	1859
10	Florence, Margaret and Jane Tripp (friends), South Yarra	1860
11	Lizzie (former servant), Melbourne	1860

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|----|---|-----------|
| 12 | From Alice McRae (cousin), England  | 1864-1868 |
| 13 | From Emma McRae (cousin), London  | 1864      |
| 14 | From Elizabeth Emma Bourne (cousin), London,<br>(perhaps the same person as Emma McRae)   | 1865-1866 |
| 15 | From Julia M Brind (cousin), England  | 1866-1867 |
| 16 | From Jennifer McRae (cousin), England   | 1866      |
| 17 | From Eliza Bridges (sister of James McRae), London,<br>also an undated letter, and undated letter from E<br>Evans, who lived with Eliza Bridges | 1870      |
| 18 | From Mary McRae (wife of John McRae, James Butler<br>McRae's brother), England  | 1876      |
| 19 | From Susan Archer (eldest daughter), Melbourne  | 1877      |

#### **Letters from Emily**

- |      |   |           |
|------|---|-----------|
| 20/1 | To Eliza Reed (aunt), in England  | 1852-1869 |
| 20/2 | To Eliza Reed (aunt), in England (letter dated<br>25 October 1874 includes transcript)                          | 1870-1877 |
| 21   | To Emma (carbon copy of letter from Collingwood<br>dated 2 November 1854 says it is a year since<br>Fanny died) | 1854      |

#### **Letters to Eliza Reed**

- |    |  |           |
|----|--|-----------|
| 22 | From Betsy Wayland (friend), Romford   | 1821      |
| 23 | From James McRae (brother-in-law), on board<br><i>Roxburgh Castle</i> , from Melbourne and Tasmania<br>(letter dated 12 April 1877 refers to "poor dear<br>Mary Ann", possibly Emily's mother) | 1853-1878 |
| 24 | From J Herbert McRae (James McRae's nephew),<br>London   | 1864-1865 |
| 25 | From Eliza Bridges (James McRae's sister), London,<br>(includes a letter written by E Evans)   | 1867-1872 |
| 26 | From Susan Archer (Emily's eldest daughter),<br>"Retreat"  | [1869]    |
| 27 | From Ethel Archer (Emily's second daughter),   | 1877-1878 |

“Quamby Plain”

**Letters from Eliza Reed**

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 28 | To James McRae (brother-in-law)         | 1851 |
| 29 | To Fanny McRae (niece)                  | nd   |
| 30 | To Eliza Bridges (James McRae’s sister) | 1869 |

**Letters to James McRae**

- |    |                                   |       |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 31 | From Fanny (daughter), England    | 1851  |
| 32 | From John McRae (brother), London | 1863  |
| 33 | From Alice McRae (niece), London  | c1864 |

**Letters to Susan Archer**

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 34 | From Emily Archer (mother), Quamby Plain, and Thomas Archer (father) (typescript) | 1877 |
| 35 | From Ethel Archer (sister), Quamby Plain, Retreat Brewery                         | 1877 |
| 36 | From Clifford Archer (brother), Quamby Plain                                      | 1877 |
| 37 | From Eliza Reed (great aunt), London  | 1878 |
| 38 | From Mrs Stephanie Green (relative?), London                                      | 1923 |

**2. Miscellaneous Items**

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|----|--|--|
| 39 | Envelopes addressed to Emily, James McRae and Eliza Reed; undated and mostly unsourced cuttings from English publications; locks of hair from various family members; 2 visiting cards for “Mr Thos. Kentish Archer” and one for “Mrs Thos. Kentish Archer”; part of invitation to Mr & Mrs Archer to a ball given by Governor & Mrs Gore Browne, 28 May no year, with note on reverse by Emily; miscellaneous fragments |  |
| 40 | The Archer Family tree, prepared by Mary Alicia Archer Roberts, January 1986 <b><i>Oversize item</i></b>   |  |

**OTHER SOURCES**

Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Community History, 1995.P.0464

QVMAG, Community History, secondary file, Personal-C (Clark) 'The ancestors of Captain William Clark: memoirs collected by Mrs Joseph Archer of Panshanger, Longford, 1899', 9 pages of typed notes, with a second copy filed under 'Personal-W (Weston)'

*Australian historic records register*, Canberra, 1989, entry under Pedley

Scott and Barbara Bennett, *A biographical register of the Tasmanian parliament 1851-1960*, Canberra, 1980

Jill Cassidy, *Deloraine's industrial heritage: a survey*, Launceston, 1986, p.32

Neil Chick, *The Archers of Van Diemen's Land*, Lenah Valley, 1991

*Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol.2, Hobart, 1900, p.349, article on T K Archer

Tasmanian Pioneers Index

Victorian Pioneers Index