
ROONEY, Rev. Isaac

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Series List

Isaac Rooney was born on March 11, 1843, at Castle Caulfield - often written today as Castlecaulfield - which is a small village in County Tyrone of Northern Ireland (Ulster). To the east of Castle Caulfield by a mile or so is the small township of Dungannon, thence further eastward about thirty miles as the crow would fly across Lough Neagh lies the city of Belfast. He was brought to Australia at the age of six when his mother and step-father migrated. (Isaac's father, who was a churchwarden in Ireland at the time of his death, had died some months prior to Isaac's birth. His mother remarried). The young Mr Rooney preached his first sermon as a layman in Australia at the age of 18 and was ordained as minister of the Victoria-Tasmania Wesleyan Conference in January, 1864. His first appointment was to the Mersey District Circuit in northern Tasmania. (The Mersey is a river flowing north from central Tasmania to reach the sea at Ulverstone, which lies between the larger towns of Burnie and Devonport). On April 2, 1865, he married the eldest daughter of a fellow Wesleyan minister, the Rev. G. Smales. (I have been unable to trace the given names of his first wife). He was appointed to missionary service in Fiji from the Victoria-Tasmania Wesleyan Methodist Conference.

The first entry in his journal reads: "1865, May 9th - Arrived at Ovalau, Fiji." A son, William Thornton Moore R., was born on March 13, 1866. Another baby was born on June 14, 1867. His wife died on June 17, 1867. The baby died on June 20, 1867. The baby is not given a name in his journal.

Isaac Rooney remarried on March 22, 1871, his bride being Minnie Rabone, the daughter of the Rev. Stephen Rabone who had done pioneer work during the previous generation in Tonga (see also 'Introduction'). They had a daughter named Minnie who was born at Loma Loma, Fiji, September 20, 1872, and who died at Vuna Point on November 7, 1873. A son, Stephen Rabone R. was born in Sydney on September 15, 1874. (He became a missionary in the Solomon Islands - see 'Introduction'). A son, Frederick Langham R., was born at Loma Loma on May 3, 1877. A daughter, Minnie Rabone R. (subsequently to become the wife of Augustus Samuel Benson Mather, my father, in 1919) was born in Coburg, a suburb of Melbourne on March 8, 1881. Isaac Rooney's wife, Minnie (Rabone) Rooney, died at Santa Anna in the Solomon Islands on June 13, 1881, whilst he and she were en route to his new appointment in the Duke of York group (Port Hunter). He arrived at Port Hunter on June 18, 1881.

During a visit to Australia, Mr Rooney married Annie Josephine Swan on May 3, 1883, and she returned with him to Port Hunter. Their first son, Francis George R. was born on July 12, 1884. A son, Arthur R. was born on July 25, 1889.

Isaac and Mrs Rooney returned to Australia in 1889, the end of his missionary work in the islands. Another son, Leslie Davidson R., was born on September 21, 1893. From 1890, Mr Rooney held appointments as a Methodist minister in South Australia where he served the following circuits: Willunga, Jamestown, Clarendon, Gawler, Moonta, Quorn and Glenelg. By way of a 'rest' he and Mrs Rooney in 1901 visited the Middle East (Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, Egypt, Lebanon) and also the

United Kingdom where he lectured to, among many bodies, the Royal Geographical Society. This, and his contributions to knowledge of island peoples, led to his Fellowship of that body, the F.R.G.S. in 1901. Among official positions held were those of President of the South Australian Methodist Conference in 1908, and Chairman of Districts in 1881-1888, 1893-1895, 1903-1905 and 1907-1908. He was also a representative to the English Conference and to the Ecumenical Conference in 1901. He became a supernumerary in 1910 and spent his remaining years at Kent Town, a suburb of Adelaide. Though officially retired and free from regular circuit responsibilities, he continued active preaching and rendered service on behalf of the Foreign Missions and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Isaac Rooney died at Adelaide on July 22, 1931.

from the introduction to the
Journal and Letters of the Reverend
Isaac Rooney, edited by Dr. Mather.

Journal kept by the Rev. I. Rooney while working as a missionary in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. It includes entries on daily activities, observations and newspaper cuttings. 1865-1870. 2.5cm. [Original + microfilm copy.] 1

Letterbooks of the Rev. I. Rooney, consisting of copies of letters written while serving in Fiji and New Guinea as a missionary. 1881-1887. 5cm., 2 volumes. [Originals + microfilm copy.] 2

NB. A printed version of the journal and letter-books can be found at Z /266.71960924/R777/b in the Mortlock Library.

Notebooks compiled by the Rev. Rooney on a variety of subjects: "Philology Malay"; "Notes"; "Medical"; "Aryan Roots"; and "Myths and Songs from the South Pacific". c.1865-1880. 4cm. (5 volumes). 3