

Abraham Reeves, 8982, Belgravia

Researched by Marcia Watson

Baptism	11 October 1835, Holy Cross and St Giles Church, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Parents	William Reeves and Margaret Jones
Parent's marriage	4 July 1831, Baschurch, Shropshire
Siblings	Mary (1832), William (1838-1839)
Wife	Anne Wilkinson
Marriage	17 December 1860, Register Office, Shrewsbury
Children	

William Reeves was a labourer. The family lived initially at Baschurch, then Belvedere House opposite Preston Boats when Abraham was born, before moving to Coleham, all places close to Shrewsbury.

In 1841, at Alberbury, Atcham, Shropshire.¹

William Reeves, 37, Ag lab; Margaret 31; Mary 9; Abraham 6;
and Robert Lloyd 29, Ag lab; Thomas 26; Ann 22; John 6 months.

In 1851, at Barker Street, St Chad, Shrewsbury, Shropshire ²

Margaret Reeves, head, married, 36, retired dairy maid, born Nesscliffe, Shropshire.
Abraham Reeves 15, errand boy, born in Preston Boats, Shropshire.

Abraham, who said he was born in the Holy Cross parish, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, enlisted in the Royal Artillery in 1853, aged 18 years. The same year, he transferred to the 4th Battalion, and in 1854, he transferred again, this time to the Royal Horse Artillery 4th Battalion. ³

He fought in the Crimean War as a gunner in Major John James Brandling's J Troop Royal Horse Artillery and received a Medal for Service in the Crimea in August 1855 and a Clasp for fighting at Sebastopol in November 1855. ⁴

He was back in England when, on 24 April 1857, he was court-martialled at Woolwich for being absent and riotous behaviour. He was sentenced to 56 days hard labour.⁵ In December 1859, Abraham was involved in an incident at Norwich, Norfolk.⁶ On 4 January 1860, at Norwich he was remanded for stealing watches. The newspaper reported:

Abraham Reeves, a private in the Royal Horse Artillery, and wearing a Crimean medal, was charged with stealing two watches, the property of Elizabeth Chittock. The case was rather curious. The prosecutrix had made the acquaintance of the prisoner on Monday night, as he was going into the barracks, and at her request he came out of barracks again, and remained with her until late hour. During the evening they were at the Lord Raglan public-house, Thorpe, and prosecutrix gave the landlady, Mrs. Mann, two watches to take care of for her. On the following day, the prisoner met

¹ TNA UK, HO107/911/1

² TNA UK, HO107/1992

³ TNA UK, WO 69/76/2501; WO 69/13/361; WO 69/112/226;

⁴ TNA UK, WO100/22

⁵ AJCP, WO86/9, p48, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1701612975/view> A gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery

⁶ Norfolk News, 08 January 1859, p5

the prosecutrix by appointment at the Lord Raglan, the afternoon, and they remained there until nearly four o'clock. During that time the prisoner was left for a short time alone in the sitting-room, and after he left, Mrs. Mann discovered that the two watches had been taken away. She was certain no one else but the prisoner, the prosecutrix, and her daughter had been in the room. The prisoner had gone from the Lord Raglan into the city to the Black Swan, where he remained until nearly ten at night, and during the time exhibited a watch to the landlord, which he could not open, and which the landlord was unable to do either. On leaving the Black Swan, the prosecutrix, who was on the look-out for him, met him, and, at her request, he accompanied her to the Alma Tavern, Cow-hill, where they remained drinking till twelve o'clock, when the police, having received information of the robbery from Mrs. Mann, came and apprehended the prisoner. The prosecutrix said she had not given the prisoner charge, because she hoped he would return the watches without resorting to such a step. The prisoner, in defence, said he had never seen the prosecutrix's watches, and the one he showed at the Black Swan was his own—a German one, which he had bought for 7s. 6d, and which he sold to a countryman at the Black Swan for 8s. 6d. He was remanded till Friday.⁷

No further information has been found so presumably the case was dismissed.

While still in the Army, Abraham married as George Abraham Reeves in 1860 to widow Ann Wilkinson at Shrewsbury. After his marriage, his wife, who had a small amount of money, bought his discharge from the Army in December 1860.⁸

The marriage was a disaster, and on 4 October 1861, Ann filed for divorce. The Petition of Ann Reeves of Number 15 Castle Street Long Acre in the County of Middlesex. Sheweth

1. That on 17 December One thousand eight hundred and sixty your Petitioner then Ann Wilkinson Widow was lawfully married to Abraham Reeves at Shrewsbury in the County of Shropshire.
2. That on the night of the said marriage your petitioner and the said Abraham Reeves slept together at Shrewsbury aforesaid but that in consequence of the said Abraham Reeves being then infected with the Venereal disease and your Petitioner being also unwell the said marriage was not consummated, and on the following day your Petitioner went up to London having previously arranged with her said Husband that he should follow her in the course of a week. That the said Abraham Reeves however did not join your Petitioner who has never since cohabited with him.
3. That in consequence of the said Abraham Reeves continually to reside at Shrewsbury and continually applying to your Petitioner for sums of money your Petitioner without having previously informed the said Abraham Reeves of her intention left London for Shrewsbury on 12 January One thousand eight hundred and sixty one in order to ascertain why he had not joined her in London and what sort of life he was then leading. That your Petitioner having been informed that the said Abraham Reeves was to be found at a Tavern called the "Nelson Inn" playing cards and drinking went there and sent in for her said Husband to come out to speak to her whereupon the said Abraham Reeves came out and swore and made use of very violent language to your Petitioner and abused your Petitioner and addressing your Petitioner said "What did you come

⁷ Norfolk Chronicle, 07 January 1860, p7

⁸ Shrewsbury Chronicle, 21 November 1862, p3

down here for you old bugger” and thereupon violently assaulted your petitioner and gave her a severe kick upon her left leg and thereby hurt her so considerably that on reaching London on the following day she was compelled to have Medical advice and was obliged to remain at home and to keep her leg on a chair for a month and upwards.

4. That since the said twelfth day of January One thousand eight hundred and sixty one the said Abraham Reeves has on divers occasions declared to divers persons that he will kill your Petitioner when he meets her.

5. That from the time of the said marriage the said Abraham Reeves had habitually consorted and committed adultery with divers prostitutes at Shrewsbury aforesaid and elsewhere and particularly with a female names Morton on divers days during the month od December One thousand eight hundred and sixty and the months of January February March and April One thousand eight hundred and sixty one.

Your Petitioner therefore humbly prays that Your Lordships will be pleased to decree that your Petitioner’s said marriage with the said Abraham Reeves may be dissolved by reason of the aforesaid cruelty and adultery by him committed And that your petitioner may have such further and other relief in the premises as to Your Lordships may seem meet.

And Your petitioner will ever pray &c, Ann Reeves.

On 17 March 1863, the final decree was pronounced, and the said marriage was declared to be dissolved.⁹

Just before Ann filed for divorce, Abraham joined the Army, using a slightly different name. 199. George Abraham Reeves enlisted in the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards stationed at Regents Park, London, on 14 August 1861. He attested for the Regiment at London on 16 August 1861 at the age of 22 years and 8 months.¹⁰ According to the Army forms, Abraham was born in the parish of St Chads in the town of Shrewsbury. He was 6’0¼” tall, a wood turner, with brown hair, grey eyes and a fair complexion.

He was a Private until 30 October 1861 (76 days), when he was imprisoned for “absence” on 31 October until 5 November 1861, when he was discharged. His discharge was in consequence of having no further occasion for his services. His character, as reported by the Regimental Board, was “Bad”.¹¹

Abraham returned to Shrewsbury, where he was in trouble a month later. Abraham Reeves, a young man whose appearance would have led a stranger to suppose him respectable, was placed in the dock, charged with having broken open and forcibly entered a house in Roushill, causing damage to the door of 1s. He was fined 5s and costs.¹²

Later in the month, the newspaper reported: A man named Reeves, who was convicted of breaking into a house a short time ago, was brought up on a charge of having gone to a house in Barker Street where a man named James Almer resides and demanded admission. When Almer refused, he ran against the door and forced it open. Almer’s cries brought the police. On the way

⁹ TNA UK, Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, later Supreme Court of Judicature: Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Files, J 77; Reference Number: J 77/45/R66; Series Number: J 77; Piece Number: 45

¹⁰ He was closer to 26 years old

¹¹ TNA UK, WO400/221, p86 - The Household Cavalry 1801-1919

¹² Shrewsbury Chronicle, 6 December 1861, p5

to the police office, Reeves assaulted one of the officers and was very violent. He was gaoled for a fortnight.¹³

Then, in March 1862, Abraham Reeves was brought up on remand from the previous day and charged with stealing a black turban hat from Miss Hammett's of High Road shop. According to witnesses, Abraham wanted to buy a hat for himself, which he said his employer would pay for. She refused to give him the hat unless he would bring an order from his master. When a shopboy was delivering a parcel to the railway station, he saw Abraham offering a hat to a fishmonger for sale in Market Square. The boy told Miss Hammett, who then found the hat was missing. In his defence, Abraham said he was offering his own hat for sale. He failed to show that he was wearing any other cap than the one he wanted to sell. He was sentenced to six weeks with hard labour.¹⁴

In 1864, Abraham Reeves was indicted on 2 January last, at the parish of St Julien, Shrewsbury, feloniously threatening to accuse William Teece, landlord of the Grapes Inn public house, Bicton's Hill, of having committed an abominable crime with intent to extort money from Teece. On 8 January, Abraham came to his house by the private door at Bowling Green and said, "If you do not give me a pound, I will go in the house and expose you and bring a charge against you; I will ruin you and your house, but as for me, I do not care". Abraham was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years penal servitude.¹⁵

The Prison Registers show Abraham Reeves, 26, married but divorced, read and write imperfectly, wood turner, received at Leicester Prison from Salop on 27 April 1864 and discharged to Chatham Prison on 29 December 1864. He had lost one upper tooth. He boarded the *Belgravia* on 22 March 1866 for the voyage to Western Australia.¹⁶

On arrival in Fremantle on 4 July 1866, he was described as:
8982. Abraham Reeves, convicted 17 March 1864, 15 years, aged 30, 6'0", with brown hair, hazel eyes, oval face, sallow complexion, middling stout, he has lost two upper front teeth, slightly pock-pitted, a labourer and single. Abraham suffered from scurvy on the voyage and, on 9 July 1866, was admitted to the sick list and treated with lime juice for 4 days.¹⁷

He was discharged to Ticket of Leave on 1 September 1870 and worked in the Albany area until 1874 as a teamster, saddler, labourer and general servant. Apart from a few minor offences, he managed to keep out of trouble. On 12 January 1875, he was sentenced to 3 months for being drunk and disorderly, and his Ticket of Leave was revoked. He was back in Fremantle Prison on 28 May 1875.¹⁸

On 24 August 1875, Abraham was admitted to the Lunatic Asylum. He died there on 7 August 1878 of softening of the brain and general paralysis. He was 43 years old.

¹³ Shrewsbury Chronicle, 20 December 1861, p6

¹⁴ Shrewsbury Chronicle, 21 March 1862, p6

¹⁵ Shrewsbury Chronicle, 25 March 1864, p6

¹⁶ TNA UK, HO23/7; PCOM2/7; PCOM2/2

¹⁷ SROWA, Acc 128/1-32; Acc 1156/CS13

¹⁸ SROWA, Acc 1156/R14



A Crimea medal (1854-56) with Sebastopol clasp



ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY.