

## WHERE DID 'WEETA' LIVE?

Hazel Rowley states in her biography that:

“After Stead’s departure from Canberra, her life darkened. Back with her family, she was ‘shovelled about’, as she put it, from one relative to another [Stead was notoriously irascible]. She felt she was a burden on them all. First she stayed with David and Doris, then

she was passed for two months to her sister Weeta, recently widowed, who lived in a small brick house in Wollongong, an hour from Sydney. Though Weeta was kind and her grown-up children called in often, Stead felt 'all but a prisoner. She missed friends with whom she could have a little booze and a chat.'

'Weeta' is such an unusual name (it's supposedly an aboriginal word for the spotted bowerbird) that there must be someone in Wollongong who can remember a neighbour or acquaintance who went by this unusual monicker. Her two Christian names were Doris Weeta (nee Stead) and she was born in October 1913. I would be delighted if some-one could tell me either whereabouts in Wollongong Weeta lived or even simply her married name so I can use an old phone book to track down her address.

The person responsible for inflicting the name 'Weeta' on this hapless individual was of, of course, Christina's father - David Stead. He was a truly fascinating man and a noted naturalist. A member of the Linnean Society at an incredibly young age and an authority on fish in Australian waters he'd had very little education but was a man of considerable intellect. The one thing about which Rowley's biography convinces me is that David Stead is at least as worthy of a biography as his more famous daughter Christina.

And if you haven't read either Christina Stead's *For Love Alone* or *The Man Who Loved Children* then I suggest you do (and while you're at it give *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* a go) and you'll find you might gain at least an inkling (fictional though much of that inkling may be) of precisely how interesting it can be to have put up with an 'interesting' man.

Joseph Davis