



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Bro Dr CHARLES EDWARD STRUTT (1814 - 1897)

Bro Dr Charles Edward Strutt, Medical Practitioner and Public Servant, was born in Colchester, Essex, England, in 1814, the son of Jacob George Strutt, Surgeon, of Colchester and Elizabeth Frost of Hull, Yorkshire. Jacob abandoned medicine shortly after Charles' birth and pursued a career of painting for the rest of his life. A number of his works were exhibited at the Royal Academy, the British Institute, and the Suffolk Street Gallery in London. Charles' mother was also a painter.

The Strutts went abroad to live and finally settled in Italy. By 1863 they were in some financial difficulties and Elizabeth was awarded a Civil List pension of £70 because of her "straitened circumstances at a great age and after 55 years of contribution to literature".

Jacob and Elizabeth both died in 1867. Their graves are in the Testaccio Cemetery in Rome (better known as the English Cemetery) where the remains of Shelley and Keats also rest.

Little is known about Charles Strutt's education except that he qualified in medicine in Edinburgh and London. In 1847, he translated two works of the Swedish scientist and religious mystic, Swedenborg, into English - *Miscellaneous Observations connected with the Physical Sciences and Principles of Chemistry*.

On Wednesday, 10 October 1849, Charles Strutt went to visit the Land and Emigration Commissioners in their offices at 9 Park Street, Westminster having recently returned from his first voyage to Sydney as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the Commissioners' emigrant ship, the *St Vincent*. Reports from the colony had praised Surgeon Strutt's handling of the emigrants on that ship. In the course of his conversation that morning with Commissioners Thomas Murdoch and Frederic Rogers and the man most responsible for the daily running of the Australian assisted emigration, the Commission's Secretary, Stephen Walcott, Strutt was offered the post of Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Thomas Arbuthnot* which was to take 194 Irish orphan girls on a three months voyage to Australia - a daunting prospect. He tried to get the Commissioners agreement, if he took the assignment, to pay his passage back to England, but they declined. He initially refused the offer but after reconsidering it, he accepted and was appointed to join the ship at Plymouth on 22 October. Strutt kept a personal journal where he recorded all this information and which has survived. It is now held in the La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

Strutt's journal provides a unique insight into the journey of these Irish orphans to New South Wales. No similar document exists of any other orphan ship. He also described his journey up the country to Yass and Gundagai where he supervised the hiring of a large party of *Thomas Arbuthnot* girls to local employers.

