



## 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.

This young doctor, aged 35, arrived at the Government Emigration Depot on the Baltic Wharf, Plymouth to take charge of the emigrants. At ten in the morning, Sunday, 28 October 1849, the *Thomas Arbuthnot* sailed from Plymouth; ninety-nine days later, at dusk on Sunday, 3 February, 1850, it anchored off Garden Island in Sydney Harbour. The next morning the ship moved round into Sydney Cove.

On Thursday, Surgeon Strutt inspected the quarters prepared for the girls at the Female Immigrant Depot located at the old Convict Barracks in Macquarie Street, and on Friday, 8 February he marched the girls there.

On Monday, 11 February, Strutt volunteered to accompany 102 girls which the New South Wales Immigration Agent, Francis Merewether, wished to send to Yass for employment there. They set out on Monday, 18 February, travelling by steamer to Parramatta and then by horse-drawn drays via Liverpool, Camden, Razorback Hill, Picton, Berrima, Paddy's River, Marulan and Goulburn. On the evening of Friday, 1 March, the party camped near Hamilton Hume's residence, Cooma Cottage, outside Yass.

On Monday, 18 March, Strutt left Yass for Gundagai with 48 girls and Mary Collins as Matron. Taking three days to reach this small settlement he then spent three weeks placing the girls in employment.

Strutt returned to Yass on 13 April and spent another twelve days visiting orphans who had been hired out around Yass. He considered the sermon of Mr Brigstocke, the Protestant Pastor of Yass, to be "dull and unprofitable" but found him to be "an hospitable and active man". He also sought out the agreeable and lively company of the Irish Catholic priest, Father Magennis. His journals records six times when he dined with or visited him.

Strutt returned to Sydney on 26 April 1850 and sailed for England on 8 May on the *Thomas Arbuthnot*.

He undertook his third voyage on *Harry Lorrequer* leaving Plymouth on 27 November 1850 arriving Melbourne on 14 March 1851 and his fourth voyage on *Lady Elgin* on 16 December 1851 arriving Melbourne on 26 March 1852.

He was appointed to the Permanent Staff of the Victorian Civil Service and became Assistant Immigration Agent at Geelong on 18 June 1852.

On 24 May 1854 Charles Strutt married Margaret Bridget Ryan of Ennis, Clare, Ireland at Christ Church of England, Geelong and lived in Cumberland Street, Geelong.

On 18 February 1856 he moved to Boundary Road, St Kilda, and set up a medical practice.

Then on 7 January 1858 he was appointed as Police Magistrate and built a house in Crofton Street, Echuca. There he chaired a public meeting in connection with the formation of its first public school. In 1860 Strutt was a member of Murray River Navigation Commission and in April 1861, he was appointed as Public Vaccinator, Echuca, - a post he resigned on 22 June 1863.

In 1863 it was proposed to move him to Rushworth but a public meeting petitioned

the Governor to have him stay in Echuca.

On 14 October 1865 Strutt was a Cemetery Trustee and President, Mechanics Institute, and on 18 October was appointed Deputy Sheriff - all at Echuca.

On 28 May 1866 he was appointed to the Royal Commission on clearing the Murray River and on 20 August became its Chairman.

On 29 February 1868 he was given a farewell dinner at the Bridge Hotel, Echuca, before moving to Geelong.

Between 1869 and 1875 Strutt was a Police Magistrate in Geelong, Brunswick and Heidelberg. On 8 August 1870 he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline and in 1871 he was the Local Guardian of Aborigines at Heidelberg.

In January 1878 Charles Strutt retired from the Victorian Public Service and returned to England where he was registered as a medical practitioner on 8 September 1878.

He then resumed working as Surgeon-Superintendent and between 17 October 1878 and 24 December 1883 undertook a further eight voyages.

His death occurred on 6 January 1897 at Croydon, Surrey, England, aged 83 and his wife died on 24 June 1908 at Holborn, Middlesex, aged 76.

They had the following children:

24 March 1855	Elizabeth Sarah - married Edward Hammond Wright at Hay on 8 May 1878
1860	Alice Jane
1861	Bertha Sylvia
February 1863	Theresa Cecily - died 9 January 1864 - Dysentery
1864	Unnamed male

Masonic Career -

Charles Edward Strutt was initiated into the Echuca Lodge of Advancement, United Grand Lodge of Victoria on 14 November 1867 and raised on 25 January 1868.

Acknowledgement - Book entitled "A Decent Set of Girls" by Richard Reid and Cheryl Morgan 1996.

