

William and Emma: Sydney, here we come!

From the earliest days of his recollection, William Burchmore nurtured an ambition to travel abroad, but the nature of his calling (draper) provided little opportunity. So he thought. Then, in 1852, William (aged 32) made a sudden resolve to try his luck in the colonies. At that period, Australia was only known to the outer world as a distant penal settlement, but William was well aware of Australia's already flourishing wool industry and its impact on the textile industry.

William was once asked: "Were you not actuated by an attack of the gold fever which was rife in those early days?" "No" was his answer: "Gold, as far as I can recollect was little talked of in England at that time, although there was occasionally a wild report of a big find, especially the Ballarat boom, which I well remember; but I was never influenced by a lust for gold. My coming out to Australia was a mere act of chance. I had taken my seat at the breakfast table one morning when I suddenly made up my mind to travel. The astonishment of those present was amusing for in those days a trip to the colonies was by no means a trifling undertaking — when I made known my resolve. 'Where are you going to: America or to Australia?' one of the company asked. 'That I can't say. I haven't the faintest notion.' I replied. We can soon settle that, then." William then took hold of a walking stick and began to spin it explaining that if it fell handle pointing towards himself, it decided Australia, and if the reverse, it was to be America. The handle fell pointing to William.

Within twenty-four hours, so it's been said, William had packed up his simple belongings, paid £17 for his second class ticket, and was on board the 557 ton clipper ship "Euphrates", with Captain Munro at the helm, bound for Sydney.



"Euphrates" departed London/Plymouth on 10 February 1852 and arrived in Sydney on 25 May 1852.

On board were 56 needle women, mainly from Ireland, sent to Australia by the Right Honourable Sidney Herbert's Female Emigration Fund. William's favourite author, Charles Dickens, witnessed these women shortly before they boarded the "Euphrates" and was moved to write about these very women in the English weekly magazine, "Household Words", for which he was then editor of "[A Rainy Day on "The Euphrates" by Charles Dickens 1852](#)". The Sydney Morning Herald re-published (31 May 1852) this article as well as its own post-script article. [Charles Dickens Postscript](#).

Also on board was Emily Wilson who kept a detailed diary of the voyage. Her diary [Journal of a voyage in the ship Euphrates to Sydney](#) describes the voyage's routine, weather,

incidents, diet, activities, etc., which would have been the same as those experienced by William.

More importantly, Miss Emma Taylor was also a passenger on this passage, travelling with her sister, Eliza Taylor, and nephew, Edward Henry Taylor. Like William, they too were second class passengers. Little is known about what prompted Emma, Eliza and Henry (as he was known) to emigrate to Sydney.

In 1911, a journalist asked William: "You have had the experience of a long monotonous voyage on board a wind-jammer then?" William's reply was "Yes. 120 days out and a good passage. I didn't find it monotonous either: on the contrary, it was one of the happiest and luckiest times of my life. Yes: for it was on board that ship that I met the lady who, a few days after landing, became my wife."

Indeed, William and Emma were married by Licence on 5 August 1852 at St James Church by Anglican Minister, Robert Allwood (chaplain). In the early colony, marriages were of two kinds, either by licence or by the publication of banns. As the fees were comparatively high, only the more affluent members of the community married by licence. William's and Emma's Licence would have been granted by, William Broughton, Australia's first colonial Anglican Bishop.



St James Church (c. 1840-50)