



Source: State Library of South Australia B54849

# William RICHARDS [1796-1866] & Esther WATTS

Married on 10 March 1821  
at Madron Parish Church

Departed 12 October 1839  
Arrived 6 February 1840 on the

## Java

### Children of William & Esther:

Edward (1822-1822)  
William (1824-1893)  
Marie Louise (1826-1827)  
Alfred (1828-1828)  
George (1830-1917) m Mary Ann ADAMS  
Laura (1832-1847)  
stillborn (1834)  
Cyrus (1835-1901) m Mary Ann JACOBS  
Caroline (1837-1840)  
Francis (1842-1866)  
Henry (1844-1929)

## *Survival at Sea Prepares Tailor for a New Life*

The son of a merchant tailor in Penzance, Cornwall, William began his career as a tailor and woollen draper in South Parade Street, Penzance. After marriage to Esther Watts of Plymouth and the birth of nine children, four of whom did not survive infancy, he was persuaded to take advantage of the prospects of a better life, and a future for his children, to emigrate in 1840. As he was too old at 43 years of age to receive a free passage, he paid for himself and his family. Unfortunately he was destined to travel to South Australia in 1840 on the ill-fated *Java*, a ship so poorly provisioned and managed that around fifty of the 500 passengers, mostly children, died of disease, malnutrition and/or starvation. One of his children (Caroline) died of whooping cough while the ship was somewhere in the Indian Ocean. He kept a brief diary of the voyage, which is kept in the State Library of South Australia.

"(William) counted 28 child deaths ..., 1 still born child and 4 adult deaths. He also explained that more child passengers perished in the weeks after landing mainly due to the effects of starvation on the voyage. After being on land for a while, (he) recorded 6 other ships had arrived with passengers and crew reporting fair treatment and no deaths onboard at all. One can imagine the frustration and sense of unfairness felt by those who survived the voyage on the 'horried' Java. ...There was widespread disgust in the South Australian papers of the day and a Medical Board of Enquiry was held. This was conducted over 12 days in February and found that food had been wasted in the early days of the voyage. Official blame was placed on Surgeon Superintendent Martin appointed by the Colonization Commissioners. The captain Duthie, was absolved of blame despite his negligent attitude towards the passengers."

[SA Memory – The Voyage of the Java].

After arrival at Holdfast Bay, where the family camped for some time in order to recover from the horrendous trip, William established a business as a tailor in Adelaide, with his son William Frederick as apprentice, before moving to the fledgling settlement of Angas-town (later Angaston) in 1842, where he set up as a tailor and woollen draper. There, he and Esther had two more children, Francis and Henry Michell. Son William Frederick became a policeman, then a baker in Gawler, while George worked for a shipping agent at Port Adelaide, Cyrus practised as a wheelwright and blacksmith at Gawler and in Waymouth Street, Adelaide and Henry Michell worked as a carpenter in Angaston. William was politically active in Angaston in the company of winemakers Samuel Smith, and William and Henry Salter.

From information provided by Peter Brinkworth  
William's great-great grandson  
March 2014

