



Rebecca SOPER (1820-1877)

Married

Edward DAVY (1806-1885)

on 12 May 1847 at Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide

Departed from

Arrived December 1839 at Port Adelaide on the

Caroline

Children of Rebecca & Edward:

Elizabeth (1843-?) m F H EATON

Ellen (1845-1846)

Thomas (1847-1862)

Henry (1849-1889)

Mary Ann (1851-?)

William (1853-1916)

James (1854-1855)

Edward (1856-1881)

James (1858-1881)

Frances (1860-1860)

Arthur (1863-1916)

An Estimable and Clever but 'Invisible' Wife

Rebecca Soper, a dairymaid born in Stoke Gabriel, Devon, arrived on the *Caroline* aged 19. She had successfully applied for assisted passage to find a better life in the new colony. Her future husband Dr Edward Davy, physician, surgeon, chemist and author, who had arrived on the *Somersetshire*, was also from Devon but there is nothing to show they had known each other before meeting in Adelaide. Rather than practise as a physician, Edward had set himself up as a distiller and wine merchant when they met, and by 1841 they were living together in Waymouth Street.

Her husband's occupations and public duties in the 1840's were widely discussed and written about, but little is known about Rebecca's life during this period.

In July 1844, while living in Walkerville where Edward had built a starch factory after his distillery closed, there was a Great Flood, about which the Register graphically reported:

“During the night, bridges at Hahndorf, the wheat crop planted by the German colonists, Frome Bridge, Chain Bridge, City Bridge, German Bridge, Shand's Brewery and last but not least Dr Davy's Starch Factory, all were swept away... so sudden was the rush of water that Dr Davy had not even time to save his gold watch, but was obliged to leave this, with all his other valuables ..”

The report noted the gold watch but not that Rebecca carried her infant daughter to safety through those 'relentless waters'.

In 1853 the family left Adelaide to live in Malmsbury, Victoria where Edward practised as a surgeon and physician for thirty years with further involvement in community life. Rebecca had five more children, before she died in 1877.

Although no letters or photographs about Rebecca were kept, a letter written about Edward Davy by her son-in-law, F H Eaton, finally gave her role as wife and mother some visibility. He wrote:

“in the practice of his profession, as a surgeon, he was enabled to bring up and educate well a large family (assisted by an estimable and clever wife).”

From information provided by Jill Davy,
Rebecca and Edward's great granddaughter
March 2016

