



## Naval Tailor Fathers a Political Dynasty

Henry  
DOWNER [1811-1870]  
&  
Jane  
FIELD [1806-1861]

Married at  
Parish Church Alverstoke, Hampshire

Departed 26 February 1838 from Portsmouth  
Arrived 24 June 1838 at Holdfast Bay on the

## Eden

Children of Henry & Jane:

Charles (1834-1903) m Marion HAMILTON

Henry (1836-1905) m Maria HAGGAR

Alexander (1839-1916)

Amelia (1842-1906) m Arthur RIVAZ

John (1843-1915) m [1] Elizabeth HENDERSON  
[2] Una RUSSELL

Frederick (1846-1847)

Harold (1847-1887)

Henry Downer, wife Jane and sons Charles and Henry Edward arrived from Portsmouth on the *Eden* in 1838. The Downers were yeoman farmers from Hampshire, but Henry was a tailor in Portsmouth specialising in naval uniforms. He may have emigrated because his business suffered from the downsizing of the post-Napoleonic Navy and local contacts gave him news of potential opportunities in the new South Australian Province.

He started a tailoring business in Hindley Street, became involved in an import business in 1847, but in 1852 with sons Charles (18) and Henry Edward (15) went to the Victorian goldfields returning in 1854. He continued with various activities and for a brief time was licensee of the "Blenheim"/"Tavistock" Hotel. He was described as "not being a very astute businessman" but he had sufficient income to ensure a good education for their 5 sons (one son died in infancy).

Henry Edward and younger sons George, John (later Sir John) and Harold all studied law. There were a number of legal partnership re-groupings among the sons and grandsons. Charles, after completing pharmacy studies, bought the Anson pharmacy at Largs Bay.

Henry Edward, lawyer (and later MP), had a successful political career and was noted for his work in founding our Provincial Masonic Lodge and our Grand Lodge, the first in Australia. In 1859, he married Maria Hagger, daughter of John and Sarah Hagger, who also came to South Australia on the *William Mitchell*. Their daughter Ada married Otto, the son of the eminent botanist Dr Richard Schomburgk, while their younger daughter Alice became the mother of Lady (Jean) Bonython.

John William (later Hon. Sir John William Downer KCMG QC MP), after a period as a barrister, became heavily involved in politics, becoming Premier of South Australia and a major force in promoting the federation of the States, then a Senator in the Federal Parliament. His son Sir Alick Downer and grandson Alexander were both prominent Foreign Ministers, both becoming High Commissioners in London.

Alexander George, lawyer, pastoralist, businessman and company director, never married. He owned the property known as Monalta, which became the Blackwood District Community Hospital.

Amelia, Henry and Jane's only daughter, married Arthur Rivaz, who became a civil servant.

Henry and Jane, together with his mother Mary Ann, and their infant son Frederick Field are buried in the West Terrace Cemetery.

From information provided by Ian Schomburgk  
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