

From London Stationer to Colonial Teacher, the Migrant Journey of Edwin and Emily Jobson

By Gillian Hamilton, Descendant, July 2021



Figure 1 Edwin Jobson

On a brisk October morning in 1867 the tugboat *Scotia* towed the clipper ship *Sobraon* past the Plymouth breakwater.¹ Just three days earlier, passengers Edwin Jobson and Emily Stopher had exchanged wedding vows at St George's Church Camberwell in London.² Now they were setting sail for a new life in Australia where they would leave a lasting legacy for their descendants.

As Captain James Elmslie steered the ship away from the

Devon coastline, Edwin and Emily would have wrapped their coats firmly around them as they watched England disappear from view.³ It was the 10th of October, the beginning of an 89-day voyage to Sydney.⁴ They must have felt nervous anticipation at what lay ahead and abject sadness at leaving their loved ones. A traveller on another *Sobraon* voyage summed it up well.

“Plymouth Harbour looked lovely in the bright sunshine, with Mount Edgecombe [House] looking down on us...



Figure 2 Emily Elizabeth Stopher

¹ Reverend Arthur Wellesley Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, p. 5, <https://moorecollege.access.preservica.com/>, Mentone, Victoria, 1990, accessed 11 June 2021.

² Marriage of Edwin Jobson and Emily Elizabeth Stopher, married 7 October 1867, St George's Church Parish Register, Camberwell, Surrey, England, p. 145, no. 290, Ancestry.com.

³ 'London, 12th Oct., 1867', *Launceston Examiner*, 19 December, 1867, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36647922>, accessed 27 June 2021.

⁴ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 10 October, 1867, p. 5.

Perhaps you can understand that the moment of leaving England, alone, for an indefinite time, is not exactly the most cheerful you have experienced.”⁵

At 24 and 19, Edwin and Emily were migrating with Edwin’s brother Thomas, 29.⁶ The 2,131-ton *Sobraon* carried 69 crew and 74 passengers, among them the Irish Earl of Belmore, who was to become the next Governor of New South Wales.⁷ He spent much of the voyage writing his memoirs.⁸ Also putting pen to paper was the Reverend Arthur Pain, one of three clergymen aboard. “The Ship is rolling violently. I despair of a good nights rest.”⁹

The Jobsons left behind a terrible economic recession, with the London financial crisis of 1866 crippling many companies and leading to job losses.¹⁰ The NSW colony offered a change of vocation for stationer Edwin. Immigration numbers had dropped over the past six years and England was asked to send useful, skilled migrants.¹¹ He may have read the *London Evening Standard*’s article about the New South Wales Public Schools Act of 1866,

⁵ Roslyn Russell, *High Teas and High Seas: Voyaging to Australia*, p. 33, National Library of Australia Publishing, Canberra, ACT 2016.

⁶ Diary entries 1867-68, Diary of Edwin Jobson, original held by Gillian Hamilton, Kurrajong, New South Wales; ‘Ship *Sobraon*. January 8th, 1868’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1868, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13161005>.

⁷ ‘New South Wales, Australia, Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922’, *ancestry.com*; ‘Shipping’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1868, p. 4. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13160964>, accessed 24 June 2021.

⁸ http://www.schoonerman.com/CLIPPER-SHIPS/sobraon_clipper_ship.htm; ‘Belmore Papers’, ‘*Sobraon Diary*’, RONI/D/3007/K/1/1, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/belmore-d3007.pdf>, p. 24, accessed 10 June 2021.

⁹ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 18 October, 1867, p. 12.

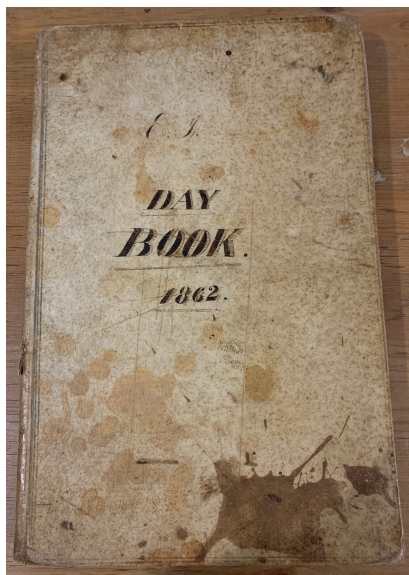
¹⁰ Bank of England, ‘Demise of Overend Gurney’, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/quarterly-bulletin/2016/the-demise-of-overend-gurney.pdf>, accessed 10 June, 2021; <https://www.thehistoryoflondon.co.uk/the-history-of-the-port-of-london-a-vast-emporium-of-all-nations/>, accessed 13 June 2021.

¹¹ ‘Emigration’, *Illustrated Sydney News*, 29 September, 1867, p. 1. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63514702>, accessed 24 June 2021.

which allowed for new schools in country areas, thus providing teaching opportunities.¹² By 1869, there were 70,000 children in the colony's public schools.¹³

No formal teaching qualifications were required and Edwin had been well-educated, being the son of a high street linen draper.¹⁴ He and his brothers were sent to boarding school and his sisters had a French governess.¹⁵

In August 1867, newspapers reported that the *Sobraon* was heading to Sydney, with first and second-class cabins available.¹⁶ It was a well-appointed ship used solely for the England to Australia migration route and made just one round trip a year.¹⁷



Packed in Edwin's luggage was a tan hard-cover journal with marbled endpapers titled *E. J. DAY BOOK 1862*, detailing the births, deaths and marriages of his parents and seven siblings. He wrote the following brief words about their journey:

“Left Plymouth, England 10th October 1867 per *Sobraon* Capt Emslie [sic]. Landed at Sydney N.S.W Jan'y 7, 1868 by (ship) *Sobraon* Capt Emslie”¹⁸

Figure 3 Edwin Jobson's Day Book

¹² ‘The West India, Pacific, Australia and New Zealand Mails’, *London Evening Standard*, 1 January 1867, p. 6, <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au>, accessed 27 June 2021.

¹³ ‘The revival of discussion in reference to immigration’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 May 1869, p. 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28421584>, accessed 26 June 2021.

¹⁴ Gillian Hamilton to Gaye Braiding, Education Officer, NSW Schoolhouse Museum, email, 15 June 2021, original held by the author; ‘1861 England Census’, Ancestry.com.

¹⁵ ‘1851 England Census’, Ancestry.com.

¹⁶ ‘Advertisements and Notices’, *Daily News London*, 21 August 1867, p. 1, <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au/>, accessed 26 June 2021.

¹⁷ ‘Sobraon’, http://www.schoonerman.com/CLIPPER-SHIPS/sobraon_clipper_ship.htm

¹⁸ Diary entries 1867-68, *Diary of Edwin Jobson*, original held by Gillian Hamilton, Kurrajong, New South Wales.

The passengers were well-fed, even if the food wasn't of the usual standard. "The Beer is not Bass's, the marmalade is not Keiller's, the prunes are old and dry and hard, and the sugar is not white," complained Reverend Pain.¹⁹

With no land in sight, the passengers took delight in spotting albatrosses, whales and porpoises. "...disagreeable black looking things of the monster kind".²⁰ For a bit of fun, a chair was fitted for the ladies to be hoisted up the rigging in the moonlight.²¹

The Jobsons watched amateur theatrical performances in the second-class saloon, read the *Sobraon Gazette and Atlantic Intelligence* newspaper, and wrote letters to be handed to the next vessel that passed the *Sobraon*. On Sundays, there were church services.²²

At the beginning of November, the Southern Cross constellation could be seen and a few days later, they crossed the Equator, amid much ceremony and merriment.²³ But by 20 November, Reverend Pain reported the emergence of a general sense of weariness.²⁴ The first sight of land, the island of Tristan d'Acunha, came as they skirted the dangerous waters off the Cape of Good Hope, and there was great excitement one day when an iceberg was spotted.²⁵

Christmas preparations brought a sense of being able to "smell Sydney", with their arrival less than two weeks away.²⁶ The passengers decorated a tree with handmade gifts of carved

¹⁹ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 15 October, 1867, p. 11.

²⁰ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 24 November, 1867, p. 30.

²¹ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 11 December, 1867, p. 35.

²² Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 26 October, 1867, p. 17 and 25 November 1867, p. 30.

²³ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 1 November 1867, p. 20 and 7-8 November, 1867, pgs. 23-25

²⁴ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 20 November, 1867, p. 28.

²⁵ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 1 December 1867, p. 32 and 16 December, 1867, p. 36; <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/145476/the-cape-of-good-hope>, accessed 26 June 2021.

²⁶ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 20 December, 1867, p. 37.

paper knives, bookmarkers, illuminated texts, pincushions, paintings, dolls and toys.²⁷ A skilled needleworker, Emily may have stitched a gift for the tree.²⁸ The ship's crew sang carols "to make this Christmas like a home-Christmas" and there was only one hiccup: "Cook is drunk and let all the plum pudding burn, so we have not had any today."²⁹

A gale blew heavily on New Year's Eve and Captain Elmslie said he had never seen higher seas. Newly pregnant Emily may not have felt very well.³⁰ Waves swamped parts of the ship and one second-class passenger removed 32 buckets of water from his cabin.³¹ By 5 January, they were 275 miles from Sydney and the excitement was palpable.

It was cloudy and rainy when the *Sobraon* reached Sydney Heads on 7 January 1868 and anchored in the waters off Government House, the same day the last convict ship arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia, ending 80 years of convict transportation.³² Once disembarked, the Jobsons may have stayed at Petty's Hotel in York Street with many of the other passengers, so they could witness the swearing-in of Lord Belmore as Governor the following day.³³

"... we have been to the very end by no means an ordinary Shipload of Passengers: we have felt rather 'big'," wrote Reverend Pain.³⁴

²⁷ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 24 December, 1867, p. 39.

²⁸ Emily Jobson, two hand-embroidered whitework doileys with satin-stitched initials E.J., collection of Gillian Hamilton, Kurrajong NSW.

²⁹ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 25 December, 1867, pp.39-40.

³⁰ Birth certificate of Edith Jenny Jobson, born 10 August 1868, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, New South Wales, 18429/1868.

³¹ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 31 December, 1867, p. 44; 'Arrival of the Earl of Belmore', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1868, p. 4, accessed 20 June 2021.

³² Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 7 January 1868, p. 44; Margaret Olds, *Australia through Time*, Mynah Books, Random House Australia, Milsons Point NSW, 1997, p. 14.

³³ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 8 January, 1868, p. 46; 'Petty's Hotel', <https://www.badseysociety.uk/sladden-archive/places/australia-sydney-pettys-hotel-1-york-street>, accessed 28 June, 2021.

³⁴ Pain, *My First Sea Voyage*, 9 January 1868, p. 45.

Edwin secured a teaching position at Gunning, 150 miles southwest of Sydney, and went on to have a long career in education, supported by Emily, who taught domestic skills and needlework.³⁵ Thomas, a carpenter, married Susannah Lawless at Yass in September 1868 and moved to Cootamundra, making his name as a builder, responsible for the courthouse, public school, and both Catholic and Anglican churches.³⁶



Figure 4 Emily, Arthur and Edwin Jobson, Rockley School, Rockley NSW c1885

Edwin died in 1911 and when Emily passed in 1932, it was written that “Mr and Mrs Jobson... will long be held in affectionate remembrance, and many of the school children of their day have reason to remember the kindly acts and wise counsels of these their beloved teachers.”³⁷

³⁵ ‘School Teachers Rolls 1869-1908’, Series NRS 4073, p. 549, New South Wales State Archives and Records, <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/school-teachers-rolls>, accessed 10 June 2021; ‘Melbourne International Examination Awards’, *The Argus Exhibition Supplement, The Argus*, 20 May 1881, p. 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/5963004>, accessed 10 June 2021;

³⁶ Marriage certificate of Thomas Jobson and Susannah Lawliss [sic], married 10 December 1868, Gunning NSW, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, New South Wales, 3723/1868; ‘Index 1887’, *Cootamundra Herald*, 3 August 1887, p. 6, accessed 10 June 2021.

³⁷ Death certificate of Edwin Jobson, died 27 November 1911, Marrickville, NSW, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, New South Wales, 15350/1911; Death certificate of Emily Elizabeth Jobson, died 18 June 1932, Marrickville, NSW, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriage, New South Wales, 5574/1932; ‘The death of Mrs. E. E. Jobson’, newspaper clipping, 1932, Diary of Edwin Jobson, original held by Gillian Hamilton, Kurrajong, New South Wales.

As a result of Edwin and Emily's decision to migrate to Australia nearly 154 years ago, 14 family members became teachers. There are now Jobson descendants teaching in Australia, China and the United States, a truly lasting legacy of the Jobsons' trip of a lifetime.³⁸

³⁸ Gillian Hamilton to Robert Cribb, cousin, Facebook Messenger conversation, 27 June 2021, original held by the author; Gillian Hamilton to Geoffrey Logan, father, phone conversation, 27 June 2021, notes held by the author; Gillian Hamilton to Stephanie Clare, cousin, phone conversation, 27 June 2021, notes held by the author; Gillian Hamilton to Lynn Gardner and Karen Logan, cousins, Facebook group 'Descendants of Edwin and Emily Jobson', 27 June 2021, posts contained in FB group.