

Matilda arrives in Adelaide

URRBRAE HOUSE SCHOOLS' PROGRAM



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Matilda Methuen was born in 1836 and grew up in Leith, Scotland. Her father, James, was a herring merchant and salt fish curer. She had 10 brothers and sisters. Matilda sailed from the United Kingdom to Adelaide, South Australia in 1864 on a ship named "City of Adelaide." She was 28 years old and had been engaged to Peter Waite for seven years. It had been five years since she had seen Peter who had left Scotland in 1859 to make a new future in the colony of South Australia.

Although Matilda travelled on her own, she travelled in comfort on the ship with a first class cabin to herself. She was even able to bring her harmonium (a keyboard instrument) with her. The voyage to South Australia took 93 days.

After arriving at Port Adelaide on 7 November 1864, Matilda stayed with Joanna and Robert Barr Smith at St Clair in Woodville. On Monday, 21 November Matilda married Peter Waite. On the same day she and Peter started the long journey to Paratoo station where Peter had built his homestead.

Can you find Paratoo on a map? How long do you think it would take to get there from Adelaide today? In 1864 it took Matilda and Peter at least four days. On the first day they would have set off in a buggy and mostly likely have reached the town of Gawler. The next day would have been a 115 kilometre trip to Burra. In both these towns there were inns for them to stay at overnight.

The final part of their journey from Burra to Paratoo was a distance of about 160 kilometres and would have taken at least two more days along bumpy, dusty roads and tracks. It was the beginning of summer and very warm for someone like Matilda used to the cooler climate of Scotland.



ACTIVITY | Write a diary of Matilda's Journey

A short version of the diary might focus on the Matilda's and Peter's trip from Adelaide to Paratoo. A longer version might also include Matilda's journey from Scotland to Adelaide and then onto Paratoo. You might like to include some drawings of things Matilda may have seen on her journey.

Some things you might think about before you start to write the diary.

- *What would life have been like on-board a sailing ship in 1864?*
- *How would Matilda have felt about her journey?*
- *Would her clothes from Scotland have been suitable for her travels?*
- *Would the landscape in South Australia have been different to the scenery in Scotland?*
- *What sort of animals might Matilda have seen for the first time in South Australia?*
- *What might Matilda have felt when arriving at Paratoo?*

RESOURCES

Information about the **City of Adelaide** clipper ship can be found online at: <https://www.cityofadelaide.org.au>
Photographs of the Paratoo homestead and station taken some years later around 1900 and 1934 can be seen online in the State Library of South Australia's photographic collection at:

<http://images.slsa.sa.gov.au/mpcimg/29500/B29469.htm>

<http://images.slsa.sa.gov.au/mpcimg/29500/B29470.htm>

http://images.slsa.sa.gov.au/mpcimg/18500/B18329_1.htm

http://images.slsa.sa.gov.au/mpcimg/18500/B18329_2.htm