



RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

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Meetings

The Group meets on the second Saturday each month at the Ryde Development Trust Offices in Union Road, Ryde.

Membership is free to anyone who is interested in the heritage of the town of Ryde.

Research is centred on Ryde Cemetery, and the people who are buried there, their links to Ryde's past, their lives, homes, businesses, families and descendants.

Benjamin Archer Kent M.D A Medical Pioneer in Southern Australia

Benjamin Archer Kent was born in Abingdon in 1808. He studied at Edinburgh University to become a Doctor of Medicine, graduating in 1831. Three days later he married Marjory Redman Bonar.

He first practiced medicine in Walsall and then London, but in 1839 he became ill and was advised to give up medical practice. That year he decided to purchase a brick-making machine and take it to Australia where he hoped to make a living. In November 1839 Kent and his family left England; they reached Port Adelaide in Australia in April 1840.

Kent had many problems in Australia: his brick-making enterprise failed and he was persuaded to mill grain instead. This business also failed and he ended up in the Insolvency Court in 1843. Early in 1843 he realised he had no alternative but to again earn his living as a physician.

He was a popular and successful doctor and was able to pay off his debts in three years. In 1847 the first anaesthetic in South Australia was administered; it was given by Dr Kent for an operation carried out by his partner Dr Bayer. Dr Kent was considered a leading physician in Adelaide, respected by all who knew him and part of the city of Adelaide, Kent Town, was named after him.

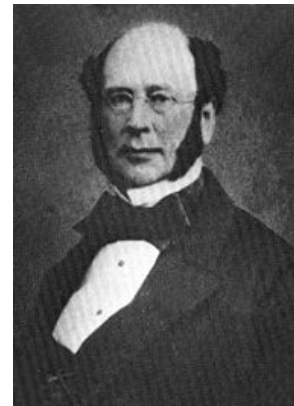
In 1854 news arrived that his father was ill and he decided to return to England temporarily. In December 1854, Dr Kent, his wife, three of his four children and Josephine Newman (the 17 year old daughter of a friend) left Adelaide for England arriving in Liverpool in April 1855.

The next few years of Dr Kent's life are a mystery. However in 1857 he intended to return to Australia to live but his wife was ill and unable to travel. By this time Dr Kent could afford to retire, so he planned to take two of the children back to Australia, to settle his affairs there and to return to his ailing wife as soon as possible. He was back in Adelaide by March 1858 and once his affairs were completed, he returned to London by July 1858. His wife was very seriously ill and she died in January 1859; later that year his father also died.

Josephine Newman, the girl who had travelled to England with the Kent family was at finishing school in Brighton, but she was not happy at school and spent any free time she had with the Kent's. In the latter part of 1859 her life suddenly changed when Dr Kent asked her to become his wife; he was 52 and she was 23. The wedding took place on 1st February 1860; within two months Josephine was pregnant and they decided to move away from London to the Isle of Wight. Dr Kent purchased 12 St Johns Park, Ryde. In October 1860 their son, Frederick was born, he was premature and died a few months later.

For the Kent family, life in Ryde must have been very happy; they had a daughter, Amy, in 1862 and a son, Charles, in 1864 but their pleasure was short lived. Dr Kent's vision was failing and he needed an operation to remove cataracts. The operation was conducted in London in November 1864 but Dr Kent died a few days later. His body was brought back to the Island and he is buried in Ryde cemetery. His grave is marked by a large marble obelisk and is just off the main path, near to the central chapels

With thanks to Peter Schurr, Dr Kent's great-grandson, for donating a copy of his book 'Benjamin's Son', the biography of Dr Kent, to Ryde Social Heritage Group.



Newsletter of the RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

Tales from the Cemetery – Recording Memorials

This was picked up from the Hampshire-Life Mailing list, author unknown

“Some time ago, when I was involved with the Cleveland Family History, Society (in England), a call went out for volunteers to copy the gravestone inscriptions in the churchyards surrounding Hartlepool, Durham, England. I chose to record Hart parish church. It's easier to record in winter when the grass has died down and the day I selected was very cold, with about four inches of snow on the ground. Since it's not easy to write with gloves on, I chose to dictate the inscriptions into a tape recorder. To keep the batteries warm, I put the tape recorder under my coat and fastened the microphone to my lapel. I took with me a small brush to clear snow off the stones. Transcribing went smoothly until I got to an area of the graveyard near the wall where the snow had drifted. I tripped over a root and fell flat on my face into the snow. After muttering a few choice words, I heard, "Tut, tut, tut!" and looked up into the eyes of two policeman. Apparently they had received a phone call about a strange man, shambling 'round the graveyard, scrabbling at the stones, and muttering to himself! I had to play back the recording to avoid being arrested.”

If you would like to get involved in transcribing headstones in Ryde Cemetery, please note that we carry out risk assessments before starting out on a session like the above, which should avoid any accidents or confrontations with policemen!

Please contact one of us (names on the front of the Newsletter) if you would like to help, and we will show you how to carry out a transcription, and assign you a row or two of the site to work on at your own pace. You may decide that you'd like to do this in the company of at least one other person – so tell us your friend's name too.

Family History 101 – On 20th May 2006, from 10:30 to 12:30, as part of Adult Learners Week, the Ryde Social Heritage Group will be holding a two-hour workshop for those who are interested in getting started with Family History.

If writing your Family History is something you have always wanted to do, but didn't know how to start, then this is for you – the session will be limited to 15 people, so you will need to register. Please call Matt at the R.D.T. on 616362

Another Date for your Diary
21 March 2006, 7:30
The George Street Centre

An Exhibition and Launch of the Ryde Social Heritage Group Project and Website will be held at the George Street Centre.

Roy Brinton will give a talk on a few of the significant citizens of early Ryde, and there will be a display of some of the research done so far, as well as a demonstration of the new website.

Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

If any of this has caught your attention, please come along to our next Members' Meeting on **February 11 at 10:30 am**, Ryde Development Trust Offices, Union Road, Ryde.

The Website – the redesign of the website is moving on well, and the Beta version of the data base is almost ready for a test – we will input about 500 records before the launch so that we can test the search facility. A group of volunteers will be trained so that the work can be shared out - to type the information into the database. If you would like to help, please contact one of us.

Please contact us if you have any ideas for future editions of the Newsletter. Would you like to volunteer your skills as a writer or reporter? Do you have a particular story you would like to tell us, or an ancestor we could research?

