

Marjory Kent nee Ballow (Dr Ballow's sister)

By Jane Smith

Dr Ballow's, Marjory, endured much suffering in her life. She had followed her brother to Brisbane in September 1841, sailing from Dundee to Sydney and thence to Moreton Bay. In 1842, she had married John Kent, who was in charge of the Commissariat Department at Moreton Bay for many years. The pair had several children, at least three of whom survived to adulthood. In 1848, after the Government establishment was broken up, the Kents had left Moreton Bay. They would return eventually and John would set up a sawmill on the Brisbane River at Shafston. When the enterprise failed, Kent turned his hand to writing. For five or six years he was the editor of the Ipswich newspaper, the *North Australian and Queensland General Advertiser*. In 1861, Kent took up a position as Police Magistrate in Maryborough.

It was in Maryborough the following year that Kent's life came to a tragic end. He had been despondent for some time – so depressed, in fact, that his wife found it necessary to keep all razors out of his reach. Her efforts were in vain. On Christmas Day of 1862, John Kent was notably quiet and 'abstemious'. He spent the evening with his wife on the verandah of his house, until about nine o'clock, when he left her side and wandered off. He was eventually found dead in the garden with an inch-long gash in his throat. He had severed his own jugular vein and carotid artery with a pocket knife. The newspaper reported that 'Much sympathy is felt for the widow and children, as it is feared the primary arrangements of the deceased are in a most unsatisfactory condition'.¹

More tragedy was to follow. In 1879, Marjory's youngest son, Douglas Vaux Kent, committed suicide in New Zealand. The 27-year-old had recently separated from his wife and was suffering from financial difficulties and 'low spirits'. He shot himself in the heart. By this time the financial fortunes of his family must have improved, for it was reported that the deceased had 'well-to-do relations in Queensland'.²

Sometime after her husband's death, Marjory returned to Brisbane. She died in Toowong in 1890, when she was in her 80th year. Marjory's daughter, Mary Ellen, lived to the great age of 96. She had married the Honourable Seymour Moreton, son of the second Earl of Ducie, and eventually settled in Sydney³. So well-respected was her uncle that upon Mary Ellen's death in 1945 – almost 100 years after he succumbed to typhus – the *Brisbane Telegraph* saw fit to point out that the deceased lady was the niece of the late Dr Ballow.

¹ (1862, Dec 30). *North Australian and Queensland General Advertiser*, p.3

² (1879, Oct 29). *Taranaki Herald*, p.2

³ Her sister, Emily Eleanor, married Seymour Moreton's brother, Berkeley Basil Moreton