



## Road Hill House Murder

Samuel Saville Kent was born on the 7th July 1800 in Allhallows, Middlesex, the son of Samuel Luck and Elizabeth Kent he was baptised on the 28th July 1800 in Whites Row Independent Chapel, Spitafileds, London, Middlesex. He married Mary Ann Windus, at St. John's Church, Hackney, London on the 8th June 1829. Mary Ann was born in 1808, the daughter of a wealthy coach builder from Bishopsgate Street, London. They had 10 children, four of whom were living



Mary Ann Windus Kent

at the time of the murder. These were Thomas Saville, born December 1830, died January 1832; Mary Ann Alice, born October 1831, died 13th February 1913; Elizabeth, born December 1832, died 1922; Edward Windus, born April 1835, died 11th July 1858; Henry Saville, born February 1837, died May 1838; Ellen, born September 1839, died December 1839; John Saville, born March 1841, died July 1841; Julia, born April 1842, died September 1842; Constance Emily born 6th February 1844, died 10th April 1944 and William Saville, born 10th July 1845, died 11th October 1908. Of the surviving children the two older daughters, Mary Ann Alice and Elizabeth were born in Finsbury, Middlesex and the Constance Emily and William Saville in Sidmouth Devon.



Samuel's occupation as a Factory Commissioner for the Home Office, his duties required him to inspect factories that employed women and children. It also meant the family moved fairly often.

Since Mary Ann had been ill for a long time, with an obstruction of the bowel, Samuel employed a very attractive governess, Mary Drewe Pratt to take care of his young family. Mary Ann Windus Kent died in May 1852 (registered in the June Quarter) and was buried in the churchyard of St. Thomas À Becket in East Coulston pictured right.



Just over a year after Mary Ann's death Samuel married Mary Drewe Pratt in Lewisham, London (registered in the September Quarter of 1853) fuelling rumours that Samuel, a known adulterer, and Mary Drewe Pratt were having an affair whilst Mary Ann was alive.

By 1860 Samuel and Mary had produced three children, Mary Amelia Saville, born 1855, Francis Saville, born August 1856 and Eveline Annie., born 1858, all at Road. Mary was expecting her 4th child at the time of the murder, the unborn child being Acland Saville Kent, born later in 1860.

On the night of 29 June, 1860 three-year-old Francis Saville Kent was kidnapped from his room at Road Hill House, on the edge of village Road, (renamed Rode) between Wiltshire and Somerset. He was the son of Samuel Saville Kent and Mary Drew Pratt.

His body was found sometime later in the vault of an outhouse (a privy) on the property, by two local villagers, William Nutt, a shoemaker, and Thomas Benger, a farmer.



Family members in the house on the night of the abduction were:- Samuel Kent, aged 59, head of the family; Mary Kent (nee Pratt), aged 40, second wife of Samuel; Mary Ann Kent, aged 29, daughter of Samuel's first marriage; Elizabeth Kent, aged 28, daughter of Samuel's First marriage; Constance Kent, aged 16, daughter of Samuel's first marriage; William Kent, aged 14, son of Samuel's first marriage; Mary Amelia Kent, aged 5, daughter of the second marriage; Francis Saville Kent, aged 3, son of the second marriage and Eveline Kent, aged 1, daughter of the second marriage

Also in the house were servants:- Elizabeth Gough, Nursemaid, aged 22; Sarah Cox, housemaid, aged 22 and Sarah Kerlake, cook, aged 23.

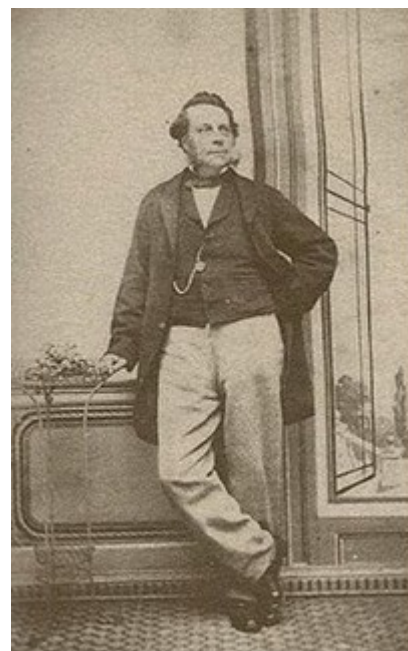
Constance Kent

## Jack Whicher, Investigating Detective.

Jonathan (Jack) Whicher was born on the 1st October 1814 in Camberwell London, the son of Richard and Rebecca Whicher. His father worked as a gardener. He was baptised on 23rd October 1814 in St. Giles Church in Camberwell.

After working for a while as a labourer he passed both the physical and mental agility tests required to join the Metropolitan Police. He joined the force as PC E47 on the 18th September 1837 at was stationed at Holborn. He was 5' 8" tall, brown hair, blue eyes with a pale complexion. Charles Dickens described him as being "shorter and thicker-set" than his fellow officers, marked with smallpox scars and possessed of "a reserved and thoughtful air, as if he were engaged in deep arithmetical calculations"

He married Elizabeth Harding (although no record can be found in the UK marriage indexes) and they had a son also Jonathan Whicher born in 1838 but who died young.



By 1841 he was living in a police dormitory in a station house at Grays Inn Lane, St. Pancras, London He was one of the first eight officers that formed the detective branch of Scotland Yard in 1842 and was given the new number of A27 and was now based at Whitehall. Shortly after joining the Detective team he was promoted to Detective Sergeant.

He was very successful until he was called upon to investigate the murder of Francis Saville Kent at Road, Wiltshire on 1860. The case due to initial incompetency by the Wiltshire Constabulary and subsequent barriers erected by local magistrates and by the family of the murdered child proved to be a case too far ending in Whicher being ridiculed. His belief that Constance Kent was the culprit was proved when several years later she confessed the crime. Whicher was somewhat vindicated but he still maintained she had assistance in the crime and that her brother William was her accomplice and that she took the entire blame to protect him.

The case resulted in much media attention and was the subject of several books over the year including the Suspicions of Mr. Whicher by Kate Summerscale which was made into a film starring Paddy Considine as the thwarted detective.

It is said that several fictional detectives have been based on Jack Whicher namely Charles Dickens' Inspector Bucket, Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse and R. D. Wingfields' Jack Frost.

He died 29th June 1881

There were questions over the honesty of 'the confession' and whether or not Samuel had played a role in forcing the confession. When the confession was made, Constance was a pupil at a Roman Catholic school. Reverend Arthur Wagner, the principal of the school, gave the authorities Constance's "handwritten confession".

## Census Records of the Kent Family

1841 shows Samuel Kent 40, Mary Kent 32, Mary Kent 9, Elizabeth Kent 8, Edward Kent 6 and John Kent 3 months. Living at Canterbury House, Honiton, Devon



Constance Kent about 1856

Constance in 1862

1851 shows Samuel Kent 50, Mary Ann Kent 43, Mary Ann Kent 19, Elizabeth Kent 18, Constance Kent 7, William Saville Kent 5 and Mary Drewe Pratt, Governess 31. Living at Walton House, Clevedon Road, Walton in Gordano, Somerset.

1861 shows Samuel Kent 60, Mary D. Kent 41, Mary Ann Kent 29, Elizabeth Kent 28, Constance Kent 17, Mary A. Kent 5, Eveline Kent 2 and Acland Kent 8 mths. Living at Road Hill House, Rode, North Bradley, Wiltshire.

1871 shows Samuel Kent 70 widower, Mary Emelia Kent 15, Eveline Kent 12, Acland Saville Kent 10, Havenia Kent 9. Living in, Denbighshire, Wales.



Constance Kent from a photograph taken about 1862

Constance in 1856



The grave of Acland Saville Kent who died in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia in 1887

## THE MURDER STORY

Samuel Kent was born in 1801, the son of a prosperous carpet manufacturer Samuel Luck Kent. His mother Elizabeth Savill the daughter of property owners in Colchester, Essex. Mary Ann Windus was the daughter of Thomas Windus, a wealthy coach builder in London. Samuel and Mary met about 1826 and they were married at St Johns Church, Hackney on 8th June 1829. They lived in Artillery Place Finsbury Park.

Their children were: Thomas Savill Kent, born Dec 1830, died at 1 of convulsions, Mary Ann Alice Kent, born Oct 1831, Elizabeth Kent, born Dec 1832, both survived. Edward Windus Kent, born April 1835, Henry Savill Kent, born Feb 1837, died May 1838. Ellen Kent born Sept 1839, died Dec 1839, John Savill Kent, born Mar 1841, died Jul 1841, Julia Kent born April 1842, died Sept 1842, Constance Emily Kent born 6th Feb 1844 and William Savill Kent born July 1845.

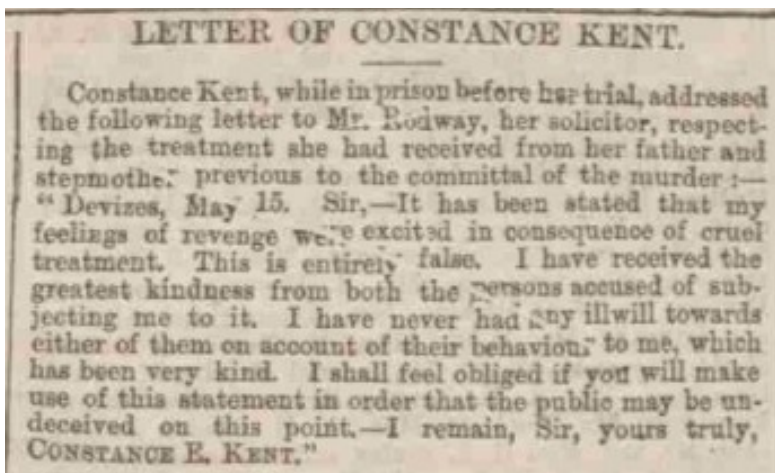
Samuel's health declined in 1833 and the family moved to Cliff Cottage Sidmouth. He became a sub-inspector of factories, implementing the 1833 factory acts. Mary Ann was in ill health before the birth of Henry Savill in 1837. In 1839 a governess was hired for Mary Ann and Elizabeth, this being Mary Drew Pratt, born 1820, the daughter of Francis Pratt a grocer from Tiverton Devon. Miss Pratt soon became Samuel's mistress after Samuel suggested his wife was insane but Harriet Gollop, their parlour maid thought Mary Ann was just unhappy in her marriage. The scandal caused them to move to Walton Manor in Somerset in 1848. It didn't last long before the gossip caught up with them and they were forced to move again this time to Bayton House at East Coulston, near Westbury, Wilts. In May 1852 Mary Pratt went to visit her father and the next day Mrs. Kent became seriously ill with stomach cramps and died in agony days later. (This is quite suspicious in itself.)

On 11th August 1853 Samuel and Mary Pratt were married at St. Mary's Church Lewisham. Constance and Mary Ann were bridesmaids.

In 1855 the family moved to Road Hill House, Wiltshire (pictured at the top of the article)

Samuel and Mary had 4 more children: their first child was still born in June 1854, Mary Amelia Kent, born 1855, Francis Savill Kent, born Aug 1856 and Eveline Kent, born Oct 1858.

In 1856 Constance aged 12 disguised in boy's clothes, and William aged 11 tried to run away to sea, but they were caught at the Greyhound Hotel in Bath.



LETTER OF CONSTANCE KENT.

Constance Kent, while in prison before her trial, addressed the following letter to Mr. Rodway, her solicitor, respecting the treatment she had received from her father and stepmother, previous to the committal of the murder:—

“Devises, May 15. Sir,—It has been stated that my feelings of revenge were excited in consequence of cruel treatment. This is entirely false. I have received the greatest kindness from both the persons accused of subjecting me to it. I have never had any illwill towards either of them on account of their behaviour to me, which has been very kind. I shall feel obliged if you will make use of this statement in order that the public may be undeceived on this point.—I remain, Sir, yours truly,

CONSTANCE E. KENT.”

There was some discontent in the household with Constance. Constance had a dislike for her stepmother. So much trouble was caused by her, that her father sent her away to be educated, only returning home during holidays. Her father also hired a new nursemaid, Elizabeth Gough, the daughter of a baker from Isleworth.

Constance and her brother William were home on holidays from school.

Constance had a very close relationship with her brother, William, whom some suspected was involved in the murder of Francis.

In the early hours of 30th June 1860, the nursemaid Elizabeth, noticed that Francis Saville Kent was not in his cot. There was still an impression of his body in the cot, she assumed that he was taken by his mother.

Later that morning it was discovered that the boy was indeed missing. By 8am, a full scale search of the grounds had begun, with a reward of £10 being offered by Samuel Kent to anyone who found his youngest son. A search was made and the drawing room door, window and shutter – all of which had been fastened on the inside the previous night – were found a little opened. Francis was eventually found in his night clothes and wrapped in his blanket, half down the water-closet, with his little throat cut to the very spine and a fearful gash in the left side as if inflicted with a sharp-pointed dagger or knife. There was one puzzling fact, there was no blood in the privy and there was bruising around his mouth.

During the early part of the investigation, a heavily blood stained night dress was found lodged in a chimney in the house. Superintendent Foley ordered that this should be watched in the hope that the murderer would return to destroy the evidence. The plan went wrong when the two constables ordered to watch over the scene were locked into the kitchen. Before they were released the night dress had vanished. Consequently he neglected to inform the authorities of the find and its subsequent disappearance. Although he suspected Mr. Kent, Foley was probably in awe of a man whom he saw as a social superior. This leads to the fact of incompetence of the local constabulary.

The major lead in the case was one of Constance's nightdresses was missing, she explained it away as being lost in the wash. She took her second nightdress from the drawer to wear and put the third into the laundry basket. The third had been seen in the basket by the maid prior to her departure on an errand for Constance. While the maid was away, Constance had the opportunity to return the still clean nightdress to her drawer. The basket then went off to the laundry – the maid unaware that the nightdress had been removed and the alibi was complete.

At the request of local magistrates the Home Secretary sent Detective Inspector Jonathan Whicher to Road to investigate the crime. On the 14th July 1860. One of the first things that he did was to contact Isleworth police for a character reference for Elizabeth Gough. On the 19th July they reported that Gough was "well known to be respectable, quick, kind, good tempered and very fond of children". Finding no evidence "that she was acquainted with any male person, either at Road or in the neighbourhood," the detective turned his attention to Constance Kent.

Constance was arrested on the 16th July 1860, but later released without trial.

On 27th August 1860, fed up with the accusations, actual and implied, Elizabeth Gough returned home to Isleworth with William her father, the baker. Barely a month later E. F. Slack a solicitor from Bath, working on behalf of the Home Secretary Sir George Cornwall Lewis, announced that Constance Kent was quite innocent and on his suggestion Elizabeth Gough was arrested and brought before magistrates at Trowbridge. She looked careworn and anxious. The other house servants spoke in Elizabeth's defence, as did Saville's mother, Mary Kent, who said, "This girl, to the best of my belief, was particularly kind to the child, and seemed fond of him; he was very fond of her." With no real evidence Elizabeth was released to great applause, she immediately boarded the train to Isleworth. The 1861 census recorded Elizabeth as living at home as a servant out of place.

Obstructed at every step of his investigation, Whicher returned to London. He resigned from the Metropolitan Police shortly afterwards without catching the killer of Saville Kent. He did tell a friend "we will only know the truth when Constance confesses".

Constance Kent herself - presumably because of the whole unsavoury nature of events, was sent, first, to a religious institution in France and, then, came back to England to enter a similar institution in Brighton - the St Mary's Home for Penitent Females (which included those women who had had illegitimate babies or who had been prostitutes). The family was, evidently, not popular in the neighbourhood and both Constance and William had been jeered by other children so Constance's absence may have been engineered as an act of prudence.

## **THE CONFESSION**

In April 1865 Constance Kent was prosecuted for the murder of her younger half-brother. She had made a statement confessing her guilt to an Anglo-Catholic clergyman, the Rev. Arthur Wagner, and she expressed to him her resolution to give herself up to justice. He assisted her in carrying out this resolution, and he gave evidence of this statement before the magistrates. But he prefaced his evidence by a declaration that he must withhold any further information on the ground that it had been received under the seal of "sacramental confessions". He was lightly pressed by the magistrates, the fact of the matter being that the prisoner was not defending the charge.

The substance of the confession was that she had waited until the family and servants were asleep, had gone down to the drawing-room and opened the shutters and window, had then taken the child from his room wrapped in a blanket that she had taken from between sheet and counterpane in his cot (leaving both these undisturbed or readjusted), left the house and killed him in the privy with a razor stolen from her father. Her movements before the killing had been conducted with the child in her arms. It had been necessary to hide matches in the privy beforehand for a light to see by during the act of murder. The murder was not a spontaneous act, it seems, but one of revenge against the second Mrs. Kent for her treatment of Constance's

mother - and it was even suggested that Constance had, at certain times, been mentally unbalanced. Constance Kent was convicted of the murder and sentenced to death by hanging, only to be reprieved by Queen Victoria. She went on to serve 20 years in prison before finally being released in July 1885, at the age of 41.

This is the census record for Constance in 1881. Convicts of Fulham Prison.

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	NAME and SURNAME	1. RELATION to Head of Family—or (2) Position in the Institution.	CONDITION as to Marriage	AGE Last Birthday		RANK, PROFESSION, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	If (1) Deaf-and- dumb (2) Blind (3) Imbecile or Idiot (4) Lunatic
				Males	Females			
1	Ada Dumont	Convict	Single	27		Servant	Plymouth Devonshire	
2	Emma Waldron	D	Married	42		Girl	Nottingham	
3	Constance Emily Kent	D	Single	35		Girl	Edinburgh Devon	
4	Susannah Handsley	D	Do	37		Chambermaid	Boston Lancs	

These the following newspaper articles were some of the reports about Constance's confession in 1865.

- The Supplement to Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser Saturday May 13 1865.
- Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. August 29 1865
- The Hull Packet and East Riding Times. July 28 1865

Below is an excerpt from South Australian Register Saturday 18 November 1865.

This showed the severity of the crime, that it gained the attention in Australian Newspapers.

### CONSTANCE KENT'S CONFESSION.

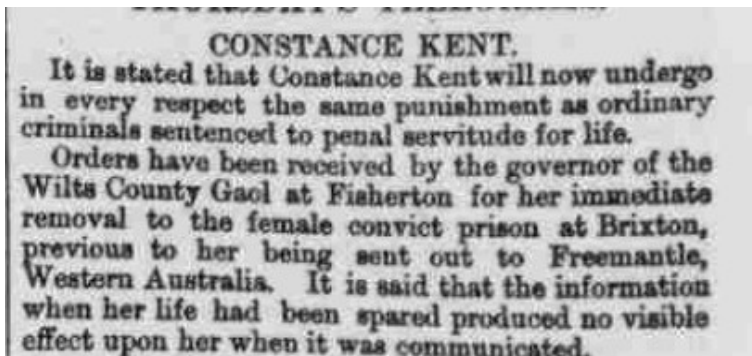
Dr. Bucknill, of Rugby, the medical gentleman who visited Constance Kent to give an opinion on the subject of her sanity, has published, at her particular desire, a confession which she made to him of her crime. On the night of the murder she undressed herself and went to bed, because she expected that her sisters would visit her room. She lay awake, watching until she thought that the household were all asleep, and soon after midnight she left her bedroom and went downstairs and opened the drawing-room door and window shutters. She then went up into the nursery, took the child from his bed, and carried him downstairs through the drawing-room. Having the child in one arm, she raised the drawing-room window with the other hand, went round the house and into the closet, lighted a candle which she had secreted there, and placed it on the seat of the closet, the child being wrapped in the blanket from his cot and still sleeping, and while the child was in this position she inflicted the wound in the throat with a razor of her father's, which she had procured a few days previously. She says that she thought the blood would never come, and that the child was not killed, and she thrust the razor into its left side, and put the body with the blanket round it into the vault. She went back into her bedroom, examined her dress, and found only two spots of blood on it. These she washed out in the basin, and threw the water, which was but little discoloured, into the foot pan. She took another of her nightdresses and got into bed. In the morning her nightdress had become dry where it had been washed, and she folded it up and put it into the drawer. Her three nightdresses were examined by Mr. Foley, the Police Superintendent, and she believes also by Mr. Parsons, the medical attendant of the family. She thought the blood stains had been effectually washed out, but on holding the dress up to the light a day or two afterwards she found the stains were still visible. She therefore secreted the dress, moving it from place to place, and she eventually burnt it in her own bedroom, and put the ashes or tinder into the kitchen grate. As regards the motive of the crime, says Dr. Bucknill, it seem that, although she entertained at one time a great regard for the present Mrs. Kent; yet if a remark was at any time made which in her opinion was disparaging to any member of the first family, she treasured it up and determined to avenge it. She had no ill-will against the little boy except as one of the children. Dr. Bucknill adds, ' She told me when the nursemaid was accused she had fully made up her mind to confess if the nurse had been convicted, and that she had felt herself under the influence of the devil before she committed the murder ; but that she did not believe, and had not believed, that the devil had more to do with her crime than he had with any other wicked action. She had not said her prayers for a year before the murder, and not afterwards until she came to reside at Brighton. She said that the circumstance which revived religious feelings in her mind was thinking about receiving the sacrament when confirmed.' The doctor does not believe Constance Kent is insane, but he thinks from her peculiar temperament that solitary confinement would be very likely to make her so.

Of the above confession the Times says:— ' A more horrible story has seldom been placed before the world. A description given by a girl of 21, of the way in which, when only 15, she murdered her little brother from no motives but those of the most trifling spite, the horrible deliberation which every turn in the story displays, the

indifference or the still more diabolical self-possession which it indicates — these things combined form a picture which may well make us shudder. It is evident, however, that we have not yet obtained a complete account of all the circumstances, whether from that obliquity of mind which seems to prevent every criminal from making a perfectly accurate confession, or from mere inadvertence or omission on the part of the narrator, it is impossible to say. There is some mystery about the nightdresses, and also about the girl passing through the house at night without disturbing anyone, even the child. Let us hope that the mystery which remains may be soon unravelled, and the terrible tale consigned to a quick oblivion.'

She insisted that she'd acted 'quite alone' and 'not out of jealousy', although she later explained to a friend that she had done it out of hatred for her stepmother, who had usurped her own mother, Mary Ann, in the Kent household.

There seems to be a lot of conflicting evidence about the nightdress, whether it was stuffed into the chimney or Constance washed out the blood stains and then burnt it.



Constance was initially detained at Salisbury Gaol, until there was sufficient space to move her to Millbank Prison in London. At the time of her crime a life sentence was for at least 12 years, 15 years without remission. After an initial period at the prison she was employed in the laundry and later in the infirmary tending the sick.

## THE AFTERMATH

Elizabeth Gough married a Kensington wine merchant, John Cockburn, at St. Mary Newington, Surrey on 24 April 1866.

The Kent's moved away to Llangollen, in North Wales. Mrs Mary Drew Kent fell ill and died on 17th August 1865, of congestion of the lungs aged 46 years.

Samuel Kent and the younger children moved further north in Wales to Llanynys, Denbigh. Samuel died on 5th February 1872, from disease of the liver aged 72 years. He was buried beside his wife in Llangollen churchyard. The older children had already left home, Mary Ann and Elizabeth living together.

William Kent was working in London as a naturalist. In 1872 he was working at the British Museum. Later that year he married Elizabeth Bennett, daughter of Thomas Randle Bennett. The latter appealed to the Home Secretary for Constance's release from prison, which was denied.

## CONSTANCE'S LIFE

By this time Constance had been transferred to Parkhurst Prison. She was working on mosaics for churches; Bishops Chapel, Chichester, St. Paul's Cathedral, East Grimstead Parish Church and St. Peters Church, Portland, Dorset. She was later moved to Woking prison and then back to Millbank. It was then realised that at the time of her sentencing, life was at least 20 years. In 1877, 12 years after her trial, the family pleaded her case and submitted a petition for release. This was followed by further unsuccessful petitions in 1878, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883 and 1884.

Meanwhile William Kent's wife Elizabeth had died in 1875 at 25 years old. In 1876 he remarried, Mary Ann Livesey. In 1884 they emigrated to Tasmania as the "Saville-Kent" family with his half-sister Mary Amelia aged 29.

On the 16th April 1885 Constance submitted her seventh petition, as a result of which a release on licence from Fulham prison was granted on 18th July 1885, 20 years from the start of her trial. On her release she was met by Rev. Wagner, who escorted her by train to his home "Belvedere" at Buxted, Sussex, where he had established a religious community, affiliated to his St. Mary's Church.

Constance left England to emigrate to Australia. She arrived in Sydney on the "Carisbrook Castle" on 27th February 1886, just six months after her release. It is thought that Constance stayed with her brother William and his family during this time.

**INWARD.**  
**A LIST of the Names and Passengers arrived in the Ship Carisbrook Castle London & Blackmore Newcastle New South Wales 27 Feb 1886**

Passenger's Name	Rank	Age	Place of Birth	Place of Residence	Remarks
A. J. Marshall	1st Mate	114	London		
B. Marshall	2nd Mate	106	London		
C. Marshall	3rd Mate	106	London		
D. Marshall	Boatswain	100	London		
E. Marshall	Steward	100	London		
F. Marshall	Cook	100	London		
G. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
H. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
I. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
J. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
K. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
L. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
M. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
N. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
O. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
P. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
Q. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
R. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
S. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
T. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
U. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
V. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
W. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
X. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
Y. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
Z. Marshall	A.B.	100	London		
Emily Kaye					

Handwritten notes on the right side of the document include the date **21/6/0** and the signature **J. Garrard**. A vertical label on the far right edge reads **Tight Binding**.

Immigration Record of Emily Kaye (AKA Constance Emily Kent)

Constance quickly established herself in the colony, working first as a volunteer in the typhoid tents in Melbourne in 1888 and 1889. Invited to train as a nurse from 1890 to 1892 at the Alfred Hospital, she took up her first substantive appointment as sister-in-charge of the Female Lazaret at the Coast Hospital, at Little Bay in Sydney in 1894. As she worked her way through 1894 and then 1895, it was clear that Constance was a capable administrator and a proficient nurse. Constance was one of the few appointed to oversee the Lazaret to be well liked by staff and patients alike. She remained at the Coast Hospital for two more years until mid-1898, when she left to take up a position as Matron of the Industrial School For Girls at Parramatta. After Constance left, Matron Jean McMaster wrote in her register that there was a 'period of comparative calm' during the administration of 'Sister Ruth' and that it took some time after she left for suitable staff to be retained. (Nurses Register, 1891–1917, Prince Henry Hospital Archives, Nursing & Medical Museum Prince Henry, Little Bay, p 304)

[1105] Department of Public Instruction,  
 Sydney, 5th August, 1898.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council, upon the recommendation of the Public Service Board, has approved of the appointment on probation of

Miss EMILIE RUTH KAYE  
 as Matron at the Industrial School for Girls, Parramatta.

J. GARRARD.

Above: Supplement to the New South Wales Government Gazette 12 August 1898



As Matron and second-in-charge of the Industrial School, Constance supervised the work of the kitchen, the laundry and every aspect of the health and welfare of the girls. She was also given additional duties, reflecting her close involvement with the daily regime of the girls. She was involved in organising and facilitating their evening activities, consisting of 'readings, recitations and vocal and instrumental music'. **(Superintendent's Report, 1899, Industrial School for Girls, Parramatta, Votes & Proceedings, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1900, Vol 6, p 483; Noeline Kyle, 'Agnes King inter alios: Female Administrators in Reformatory Schools', Journal of Australian Studies, November 1984, pp 58–69)**

Constance also gave a series of 'plain talk' lectures to the older girls. These talks were aimed at circumventing the 'sexual delinquency' thought to be rampant among the older girls committed to the school. Although never stated outright, after 1900 the Industrial School for girls was in reality a 'lock hospital'. **(G Scrivener, 'Rescuing the rising generations': Industrial Schools in New South Wales, 1850–1910', PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 1996; Noeline Williamson (now Noeline Kyle), 'Reform or Repression? Industrial and Reformatory Schools for Girls in New South Wales, 1866 to 1910', Honours thesis, University of Newcastle, 1979)**

Constance received news in October 1908 that her brother William had died in England. William had once been her best friend. As children, they had been inseparable. After the death of their mother, they had watched with dismay as their stepmother turned their childish world upside down. William died of heart failure on 11 October 1908 shortly after an operation for a blockage of the bowel. His wife and his sister Mary Ann Alice were at his bedside. He was 62. William had lived an eventful life. His career, first at the British Museum and then in fisheries management in Australia, was extraordinarily successful. He travelled widely collecting specimens for his work and wrote several books and numerous scholarly articles. **(Anthony J Harrison, Savant of the Australian Seas: William Saville-Kent (1845-1908) and Australian Fisheries, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1997, p 135; William Saville-Kent, The Great Barrier Reef: its products and potentialities, John Currey O'Neill, Melbourne, 1972, (first published 1893); William Saville-Kent, The naturalist in Australia, Chapman & Hall, London, 1897)**

Constance left to establish 'Devon Electric Treatment' at Mittagong. This move reflected both her interest in the alternative therapies of Albert Schuch. Constance was in Mittagong for a year before she took up the position of Matron at Pierce Memorial Nurses' Home at East Maitland. She retired from this position in 1932, and in the late 1930s she left Maitland to reside at Albert Street, Strathfield, Sydney at the Loreto Rest Home. She died here on 10 April, 1944 and was cremated at Rookwood Cemetery the next day. Sadly there was nobody to collect her ashes.

## **A FINAL CONFESSION?**

In the few weeks before her death in April 1944, Constance Kent contacted her niece Olive Bailey, asking her to visit her in Strathfield. During one of these visits she told Olive who she was and the story of Constance Kent and the Road murder:

Olive's mother was Mary Amelia Savill Hutchinson (née Kent)

Olive did not know the facts until long after her mother died. She was contacted by the matron and asked to come down to Loreto as Miss Kaye wanted to see her. It was probably then that Constance revealed the secret.

Typescript of interview notes by Shirley Richards with Olive Bailey, 1989

Of course, we do not know what Constance told Olive. Did she tell her the 'facts' of the case as we know of them now? That the child was murdered, that she confessed in 1865 and was in prison for 20 years? Did she confess to Olive that she was guilty, or that some other party was involved? This we cannot know, but it may be that Constance told Olive the 'facts' as she had recounted them as she stood in the dock in 1860 and in 1865, and that the secrets of the actual events of that night died with her, never to be revealed.

After her release she changed her name and went overseas and single handed fought her way to a good position and made a home for herself where she was well liked and respected before she died.

### List of All Persons Involved In the Case or Named in this Article.

Surname	Given Names	Title	Occupation	Notes
Alloway	John		Odd-job boy	
Bailey	Olive			Niece of Constance Kent, nee Hutchinson and daughter of Mary Amelia Saville Hutchinson, nee Kent.
Benger	Thomas		Farmer	Discovered the body of Francis Kent
Bennett	Elizabeth			First wife of William Kent
Bennett	Thomas Randle			Father of Elizabeth Bennett
Bucknill		Dr.		Of Rugby
Cockburn	John			Husband of Mary Gough
Considine	Paddy		Actor	Played Jonathan Whicher in the production of "The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher"
Cox	Sarah		Housemaid	
Dallimore	Eliza		Police Searcher	Of Trowbridge
Dallimore	William		Police Constable	Of Trowbridge
Dexter	Colin		Author	Penned the Inspector Morse series of books
Dickens	Charles		Author	
Doel	Emily		Assistant Nursemaid	
Dunn	William		Solicitor	Of Frome
Edlin	Peter		Barrister	Of Bristol
Foley	John		Police Superintendent	Of Trowbridge
Fricker	James		Plumber & Glazier	
Gollop	Harriett		Parlourmaid	
Gough	Elizabeth		Nursemaid	
Harding	Elizabeth			Possible Wife of Jonathan Whicher
Hatherill	Louisa		Farmers Daughter	Of Oldbury-on-the Hill, Gloucestershire
Heritage	Henry		Police Constable	Of Southwick
Holcombe	James		Gardener	
Holcombe	Mary		Charwoman	
Holley	Hester		Washerwoman	
Holley	Martha			Daughter of Hester Holley
Kent	Acland			Son of Samuel & Mary Kent, second marriage
Kent	Constance Emily			Confessed Perpetrator and Daughter from the Samuel's first marriage
Kent	Edward Windus			Son of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	Elizabeth			Daughter from the Samuel's first marriage
Kent	Elizabeth			Mother of Samuel Kent nee Saville
Kent	Ellen			Daughter of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	Eveline			Daughter of Samuel & Mary Kent, second marriage
Kent	Francis Saville			Victim and son of Samuel & Mary Kent, second marriage
Kent	Havenia			Daughter of Samuel & Mary Kent, second marriage
Kent	Henry Saville			Son of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	John Saville			Son of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	Julia			Daughter of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	Mary			Daughter of Samuel & Mary Kent, second

	Amelia			marriage
Kent	Mary Ann			First wife of Samuel Kent, nee Windus
Kent	Mary Ann Alice			Daughter from the Samuel's first marriage
Kent	Mary Drewe		Governess	Second wife of Samuel Kent nee Pratt
Kent	Samuel Luck			Father of Samuel Kent
Kent	Samuel Saville		Inspector of factories	Head of the household
Kent	Thomas Saville			Son of Samuel & Mary Kent, first marriage
Kent	William			Son from the Samuel's first marriage
Kerslake	Sarah		Cook	
Lewis	George Cornwall	Sir	Home Secretary	
Livesey	Mary Ann			Second wife of William Kent
Ludlow	Henry Gaisford Gibbs		Landowner, Magistrate for Wiltshire & deputy Lieutenant for Somersetshire	Of Westbury
Mallam	Benjamin		Physician	Of Frome
McMaster	Jean		Nursing Matron at Coast Hospital, Little Bay Sidney, Australia	
Meredith		Capt.	Chief Constable of Wiltshire	Of Devizes
Millet	Stephen		Butcher	
Moody	Emma		Woolworkers Daughter	Of Warminster
Moon	Joe		Tilemaker	
Morgan	James		Baker & Parish Constable	
Nutt	William		Shoemaker	Discovered the body of Francis Kent
Oliver	Daniel		Assistant Gardener	
Parsons	Joshua		Surgeon	Of Beckington
Peacock	Edward	Rev.	Perpetual Curate of Christ Church	
Pollaky	Ignatius		Private Inquiry Agent	
Pratt	Francis			Father of Mary Drewe Kent, second wife of Samuel Kent
Rodway	Rowland		Solicitor	Of Trowbridge
Saunders	Thomas		Magistrate & Former Barrister	Of Bradford-on-Avon
Silcox	Anna		Retired Monthly Nurse	
Slack	William		Solicitor	Of Bath
Stancomb	John		Wool Manufacturer & Magistrate for Wiltshire	Of Trowbridge
Stancomb	William		Wool Manufacturer, Magistrate for Wiltshire & Deputy Lieutenant for Wiltshire	Of Trowbridge
Stapleton	Joseph		Surgeon	Of Trowbridge
Summerscale	Kate		Author	Penned "The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher"
Sylvester	George		Surgeon & County	Of Trowbridge

			Coroner	
Tanner	Richard		Detective Sergeant	
Urch	Alfred		Police Constable	Of Road
Wagner	Arthur	Rev.		Priest that first heard Constance Kent's Confession
Watts	James		Police Sergeant	Of Frome
Whicher	John			Father of Jonathan Whicher
Whicher	Jonathan		Detective Inspector	Of London
Whicher	Jonathan			Son of Jonathan Whicher & Elizabeth Harding
Whicher	Rebecca			Mother of Jonathan Whicher
Williamson	Frederick Adolphus		Detective Sergeant	
Windus	Thomas			Father of Mary Ann Kent, first wife of Samuel Kent
Wingfield	R. D.		Author	Penned the Jack Frost series of books
Wolfe	Francis		Police Superintendent	Of Devizes