

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 10th June 1990 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating Benjamin Bristow Ranford

Citation by Mrs Gladys Whittle

Mrs Whittle, aged 91, is the eldest child of Ernest Ranford, the sixth son and ninth child of Benjamin, and the eldest of the few remaining grand children.

Benjamin Britow Ranford was born in Surrey, England, on 29 September, 1826. He was the third son of Samuel Howard Ranford and his wife Louisa, nee Bristow. He had four brothers and two sisters. His father was a wool "stapler", now called "classer", and a merchant dealing in skins and hides. In 1848, at the age of twenty-one, Benjamin sailed from Plymouth on a ship called "Marrion" to Port Adelaide to join his eldest brother Henry, who had already settled there. Three years later he sailed to W.A. on a schooner of 38 tons, which took 68 days to reach Bunbury after being forced by rough weather to put back several times into King George's Sound.

Benjamin Ranford soon saw the need for leather in the colony and leased the Perth Tannery from Walter Padbury and later bought it. The business prospered and he won medals for excellence at the International Exhibition of Victoria and the Melbourne Exhibitions of 1866-7-8.

In 1853 Benjamin Ranford had married Sarah Ann Summerland in St. George's Church, Perth. She was born in Fremantle on 10 February, 1836, her parents having come from northern England in 1832 with three sons and their first daughter, who later married Richard Morrell of Northam.

The first home of the newly-weds was on the corner of Barrack Street and Wellington Street, Perth. When the land was resumed for the railway line they moved to Duke Street, near the tannery, and then closer to town for the children's education. There were six sons and four daughters. One son, who died at the age of seven, is buried with his parents in the East Perth Cemetery. The eldest son was sent to Bishop Hale's Anglican Boys School where John Forrest was a contemporary, both boys eventually becoming surveyors. The younger sons went to the first Perth Boys School, which also survives as a National Trust centre on St. George's Terrace.

The tannery was to suffer two successive fires, in the days before fire brigades – and insurance. Following the first Benjamin ordered new machinery from England and carried on. After the second, however, he retired and handed the business to two of his sons who later sold it.

Benjamin Ranford was tall, strong man and a good cricketer. As a member of the early Perth City Council he advocated widening Hay Street which would have been easy then, but unfortunately he was ahead of his time. He lived to 81 and died peacefully without illness, his wife have predeceased him at the age of 59.