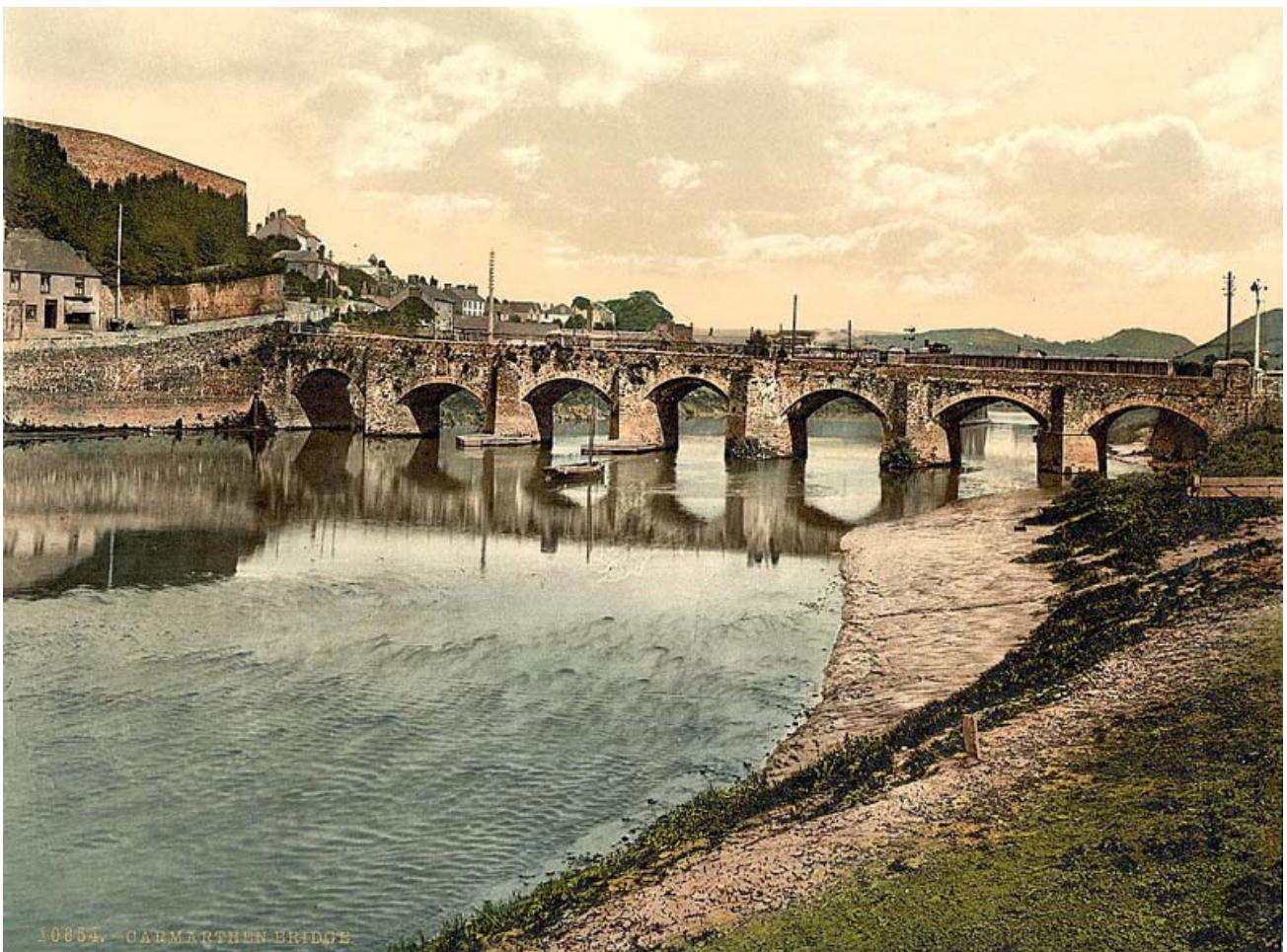


The James Family  
from Carmarthen, South Wales



John G. James C.Eng., M.I.E.T.

Based on and including an original story by:  
Kathleen Elizabeth Brook (nee James)

## The Town Hall Carmarthen, South Wales



### Introduction

In the 1980's my first cousin - once removed, Kathleen Elizabeth James (1905 – 1993) wrote a small booklet detailing the history of her family in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century with a small request that one member of the family should take up the story and enlarge it if possible. On my retirement, I decided to take up that challenge though I did not intend to write the story so formally until some time later.

In 2010, I was approached by a researcher for the Australian programme “**Who do you think you are**” as they were tracing the ancestry of a well known television personality for an episode. As a result of this involvement, I investigated “The James Family” further and this document is the result.

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Written in 1985 by Kathleen Elizabeth Brook (Nee James)

## Chapter 1

Author: Kathleen Elizabeth Brook (Nee James)

### THE JAMES FAMILY FROM CARMARTHEN, SOUTH WALES

#### The unfinished story

To those of us born in this 20th Century, Waterloo Terrace, Carmarthen would seem to provide the starting point and background for our family history but it was only in 1913 that my grandparents William and Sarah James moved to Waterloo Terrace from nearby Francis Terrace. They were both born in 1847 and are important in the history of our James family, since by their marriage in 1870 they brought together four strands in our history - the James, the Evans, the Jones and the Wright families.



Grandma James was intensely interested in her forbears and their descendants, and thanks to her we have information, which takes us back to the early 18th century.

**William James and Sarah Jones Wright  
c 1900**

Her great-great grandfather, Daniel Jones, was born in Carmarthen in 1750 and lived until 1812. He had eight sons and one daughter. His eldest son John married Mary Young; they had eight children. Their eldest son, Isaac (1756 -1823) married Mary Johnson from the Isle of Wight; they were 'Grandma's grandparents. They had six children; so by the end of the 18th century the Jones family was already becoming extensive though all did not remain in Carmarthen but settled in Swansea, Llanelly, Coventry, Birmingham and London.

Isaac Jones was in charge of law and order in Carmarthen in the early 19th century; this was the time of the Rebecca Riots. As a man in that position he expected to be obeyed. He was greatly opposed to his daughter Mary's wish to marry James Wright, a soldier stationed in Carmarthen Barracks, and he expected Mary to obey his orders. In spite of the fact that the young man's Commanding Officer commended him, Isaac Jones forbade the marriage. But, Mary Jones was also a determined person. Soon, the regiment moved to Ireland, (no doubt to Isaac Jones relief!) and, on the pre-text of visiting a friend (possibly James Wright's sister in Neath), she sailed from Swansea to Dublin, where arrangements had already been made for the wedding to take place in St. Peter's Church, Dublin. This was in 1845; soon the regiment returned to its depot at Woolwich, and it was in London that their only child, Sarah Jones Wright was born in 1847.

With the outbreak of the Crimean War, James Wright's regiment was sent overseas. He was a master craftsman, a wheelwright, and so was one of the men responsible for the efficient movement of the gun carriages. At the battle of Sebastopol in 1854, James Wright was killed. This must have been a bitter blow to his young wife. Two years later in 1856, Mary died and the little girl Sarah, now aged nine, was brought to Carmarthen to her mother's sister, Elizabeth. So it was that Grandma James began her long life in Carmarthen, living there until 1928. Her aunt was married to Thomas Harris; they had no children and brought up Sarah with devoted care.

She was sent to a little private school for her education. This was held in what is now 1, Waterloo Terrace then (in earlier days it was called Ivy Cottage). The large back bedroom was her classroom, and from the low sill of the wide window there were steps to the garden. The little girls were

allowed to walk sedately on the paths! Great attention was paid to deportment, and each day they sat for a period with boards at their backs, to encourage an upright posture (something which Grandma retained to the end of her long life!).

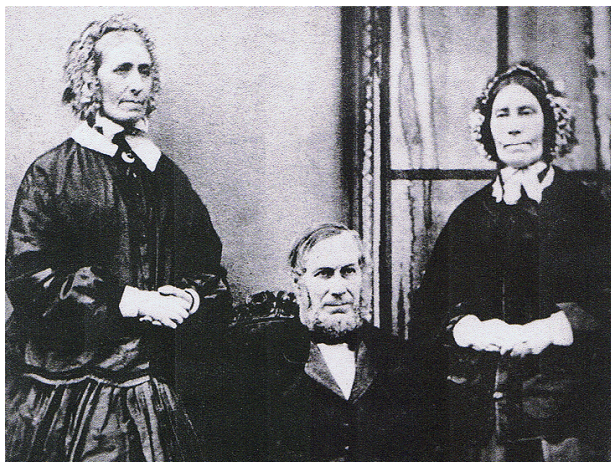
In 1861 the English Wesleyan Chapel was opened and young Sarah attended there with her Aunt and Uncle. In that Wesley congregation, there were another couple, William and Sarah Morgan, and with them was their young nephew, William James. His mother had died, and young William spent much time with his Aunt Morgan in Carmarthen and his Aunt Dyer in Ferryside (these two Aunts were his Father's young sisters). It seems that young William's attention used to wander during the services as he gazed across at the golden hair of young Sarah Wright, sitting with her Aunt and Uncle. The romance blossomed and in 1870 they were married. Marriage thus bringing together the four strands mentioned earlier; the Jones & Wright and James & Evans families.

As far as I can trace, Grandma James (until her marriage) was one of the last to bear the surname Wright, relations though her elder son and elder grandson each carried the name viz - William Wright James and Kenneth Wright Duncan James,

We do not have many details of the Wright family. Grandma's father, James Wright was born in 1817, son of Peter Wright. He had one sister, Margaret, whose daughter Fanny married Edward Reed, son of Canon Heed, the first Principal of Trinity College, Carmarthen, Edward Reed was a graduate of Brasenose College, Oxford, and for a time he was a Classics Master at Stockport. Later, he established a Grammar School for boys in Hendon. After his death, his widow (Grandma's cousin, Fanny) converted the school into a nursing home for elderly patients needing nursing care, though not surgical treatment. Fanny Reed died in 1921.

James Wright had two brothers. Thomas lived in Neath. He was a police officer; he had one daughter, Mary Ann. She married George Willis and their only child, Blodwen, died in childhood. Mary Ann Willis died in 1937 in her early eighties, having lived in Cilfynvdd all of her married life. James Wright's other brother was Peter. He emigrated to Jamaica, and died there intestate so it would seem that there was no one to carry on the surname Wright.

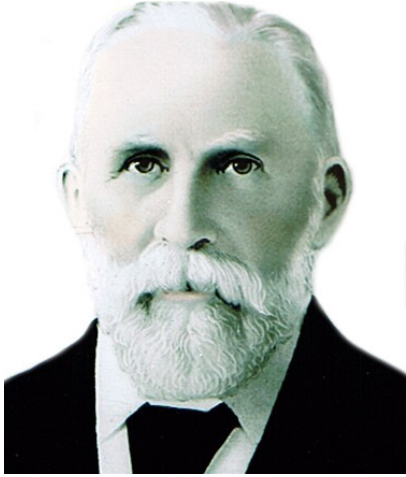
When we turn to Grandpa James' parents; there is only limited information about his mother, Margaret. (*census reports show her name as Anne*) She was the daughter of Evans, Laques Fawr Farm, west of Llanstephan. She and David James, Grandpa's father, were probably married in the mid 1830's. We know a little more of the James side of Grandpa's family. The first record we have is of his grandfather. Captain Thomas James of Portiscliffe, Ferryside. He was born in 1760 and lived until 1844, while his wife, Martha, lived from 1763 -1856. No doubt the healthy air of Ferryside contributed to such long lives - 84 and 93!



Grandpa's father, David James (1808-1869) lived in Bridge St. Carmarthen. He and his wife, Margaret, had five children, of whom the youngest was William; three of the older children Evan, Thomas and Elizabeth emigrated to Australia. Evan wished his young brother William, to join them, but Uncle and

Aunt Harris pleaded for William and Sarah to stay in Carmarthen, as they feared they might never see Sarah again if she went so far from them!

Evan James had twelve children; he and his descendants have all prospered Benalla, in Australia, mainly as sheep farmers in Australia and around Benalla. I believe that Margaret, the fifth child of David and Margaret James went for a time to America, but returned later to S. Wales.



William and Sarah James, both born in 1847 had five children. Their eldest, Mary Sarah (known later as Mollie) in 1907 married John Hebb, who owned his own drapery business in Bolsover, Derbyshire. In 1917, he was killed in France during the first World War. Auntie Mollie remained a widow for 44 years, lived until 1961, having reached her 90th year.

William and Sarah's second child, David, only lived a few months. Then in 1875, William Wright James was born. He married Elizabeth Thomas of Brechfer and Nantgaredig - I am their only child. His sister Elizabeth Agnes did not marry; the young merchant navy officer she was to have married, having died at sea,

The youngest of the family was Albert Owen James (1879-1941). He married Ellen Duncan of Neath, they had four children, Kenneth Wright Duncan, Sadie Eileen, Olwen Doreen and William Hubert. Their story and that of their children and grandchildren I leave to one of the younger generation, who will be better informed than I am.



When remembering these forbears of ours, there are certain question which one naturally asks - What were they like? What did they do? Where did they live?

I believe they were people of independent spirit, following a trade or craft or profession of their choice. To day they would be described as "self-employed".

Daniel Jones (born in 1730) was a currier. At a time when leather was widely used, those who were skilled in the treatment of leather would be much in demand. We now that at least one of his sons followed his father as a currier.

My great-grandfather, David James was a saddler, again work connected with leather. His daybook, detailing orders received, repairs carried out, makes interesting reading.

Grandma James' Aunt Elizabeth was married to Thomas Harris, who was largely responsible for the installing of gas lighting in the local chapels and other public buildings and for any necessary plumbing; his day-book, too, is also interesting.

James Wright was another master-craftsman, using his skill as a wheelwright in the Royal Horse Artillery.

Sarah James, daughter of Captain Thomas James, Ferryside (and Grandpa James' Aunt), married William Morgan who was one of the founders of the "Welshman", a weekly Carmarthen newspaper. Their son, Frank, chose the legal profession, rather than journalism, so their nephew William James joined the "Welshman" staff and trained as a printer. Grandpa James became overseer of the printing of the "Welshman" and remained there until the end of his life, in his 73rd year.

My father, William Wright James, was also apprenticed to the printing trade, and served his seven years apprenticeship at the "Welshman", receiving one shilling per week during the first year; two shillings in the second year and so on until the seventh year when he received seven shillings per week! He then became a journeyman and was engaged in the Western Mail Office in Cardiff. However, by that time, the mid-1890's, most newspapers were changing to linotype printing, and for this less staff were required, and many, including my father, became redundant. He then joined the firm of George Oliver, boot and shoe manufacture's of Leicester, who had branches throughout S. Wales. He retired when he was 71, having spent 50 years with the firm, 43 of those years as manager at Pontypridd. So changes came to the choice of craft trade.

I believe that most of these earlier members of the family, if not wealthy, were at least sufficiently well-off to provide comfortable, well-furnished homes for their families; they were literate and numerate and developed strong business and organizing abilities. We do not know the extent of Captain Thomas James' seagoing (*We do now, please see chapter 3*), but we know that he owned the three villas on Portiscliffe, Ferryside and other property lower down. (see the picture below)



Thomas James died in 1844, Martha, his wife outlived him by twelve years. In 1846 she made her will and from this we may learn further details. Her widowed daughter, Esther Dyer was the sole executrix. To her she left the three houses (leasehold) on Portiscliffe and the two houses (leasehold) under Portiscliffe and their contents and gardens.

After the lifetime of Esther Dyer, she bequeathed "the lower house next to the sea" and contents to David James (Grandpa's father) subject to paying 30 shillings ground rent to the landlord.

The middle dwelling house to Henry James, subject to paying 30s shillings ground rent, and the upper house, Coalhouse and contents to Sarah Morgan subject to paying 5 shillings ground rent, being the remaining amount due. The gardens to be divided among the three, David, Henry and Sarah. After the lifetime of Esther Dyer, the two lower houses under Portiscliffe were left to Fanny Erma daughter of Esther Dyer. To her son-in-law William Morgan £180 to invest in Government real or good personal security, with power to alter the security as he shall think fit, the interest to be paid to Esther Dyer for her life, and on her decease to pay £ 50 each to David James, Henry James and Sarah Morgan. To her grandchildren Thomas James, Martha James and Mary James, children of William James (who had died in 1844 aged 46) £10 each. If either David, Henry or Sarah should die in her lifetime, their share to be paid to their children". She concluded her will -"I exempt William Morgan from liability for losses occurring without his own willful default the residue or the estate to Either Dyer absolutely and she is the sole executrix."

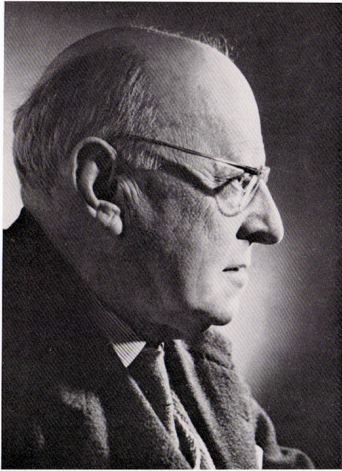
Obviously a woman of some character and also stamina. The will was made when she was 83 and she lived until she was 93. (These Ferryside forbears were buried in St Ishmael's Churchyard).

Most of these earlier generations lived in South Wales, in and around the town of Carmarthen. Some of them married husbands or wives from other parts of the country, thus avoiding being one of those closed communities where in early days, inter-marriage was prevalent. They grew up in a pollution-free atmosphere, in an area where farm produce was readily available; they therefore lived healthy and, in many cases, long lives, doing the work at which they were skilled. None of them knew the grinding poverty of the 18th century farm labourer, or the degrading harshness of the early years of the Industrial Revolution.

In their time, roads were badly maintained, but there were stagecoaches and it was possible to sail from Swansea to Bristol or to Ireland. Many years ago, Grandma showed me a letter, written in beautiful copperplate handwriting in 1791. It was written in London (I believe by Isaac Jones) and described his journey there from Carmarthen. He travelled by stagecoach to Swansea, then by boat to Bristol, and then by another stagecoach to London. The journey took four days.

Educational opportunities were more limited in those early days, but by the time of my grandparents and certainly in succeeding generations, advantage was taken of such forms of higher education as were available.

Grandma James' cousin, Kate Jones, married J.F. Morris, a solicitor, and two of their sons; Spencer and Louis entered the legal profession, while the third son, Guy, entered the Methodist Ministry. One daughter, Florence, was a graduate in Geographer. Another of her cousins was Arnaud Jones (brother of Kate). His wife, Mary, came from Derbyshire. Their elder son, Percy Mansel Jones became a 1st Class Honours graduate in French at University College, Aberystwyth, then proceeded to Balliol College Oxford, where he specialized in late 19th century and early 20th century French literature. He did extensive research in the writings of Emile Verhaeren



P. MANSELL JONES  
(1889-1968)

. As well as becoming an Oxford M.A., He was later awarded the degree of B.Litt. He published several books, mostly on French literature; his last, published after his death, recalled his early life in Carmarthen and his later academic life - it was entitled "How they educated Jones".

He was a lecturer in University College Cardiff in the 1920's and was there when Kathleen James graduated; he then became a lecturer in Cambridge, then Professor at Bangor and finally Professor at Manchester University. He was a most gracious person, affectionately known as P.N. by a wide circle of friends. He remained a bachelor and, after retirement, lived with his sisters, Edith and Nan at Oak House, Carmarthen. He died in January 1978 aged 77.

Another of Grandma's cousins was Alfred Lewis Jones, also a bachelor. He became a well-known Liverpool Shipping magnate, and developed trade with the Canary Islands and the West Indies. His shipping line, the Elder Dempster traded, too, with West African countries. He was deeply concerned with the conditions of life there, and the dangers presented by tropical diseases.

He founded the School for Tropical Diseases in Liverpool and thus helped to eliminate some of the health hazards to which those working in tropical climates were exposed. He was made a K.C.N.G. (Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George) and in addition to this honour, he received a Spanish award in appreciation of his work in developing trade - (in bananas, etc.) between this country and the Canary Islands. Sir Alfred died in 1909, leaving a considerable fortune of £ 500,000, much of which went to endow further work on tropical diseases. He established scholarships at Aberystwyth and Bangor University Colleges and contributed to several charitable works in Merseyside, His relations in Carmarthen were not forgotten and several received small legacies.



Sir Alfred Lewis Jones

Mention has already been made of the opening of the English Wesleyan Chapel in 1861; this followed almost a century of Methodist Witness and worship in Carmarthen. During the year 1763-88 John Wesley - preached in Carmarthen, at least 17 times, mostly in the open air - in the Market Place, on the Green or in the Castle, though occasionally indoors, "because of the rain". By 1775, he was able to write of his visit "the wilderness has become a fruitful field; there are 80 persons in the Society." In 1784 he preached in the market place "to the largest congregation!" In these later years he was to write in his Journal "the room was well-filled" which would indicate that the Wesleyans now had a meeting-place.

It is evident that by the time of the opening of the Chapel in 1861, there were members of the James and the Jones families among the congregation. Many years ago (probably 1927) I saw an old photograph taken at the laying of the foundation stone, and Grandma James, then aged about 12, was there with her Aunt Harris (in crinolines) and we know that Grandpa's Aunt Morgan (nee James) was also in the new Chapel with her husband and young nephew, William James.

Grandma's Aunt Harris was evidently one of the ladies who presided at table when there was a tea at the Chapel, for the royal-blue tea service, which she used on those occasions, is still intact today. When the Centenary Celebrations were held in 1961 (a few months after Auntie Mollie had died), we lent the tea service so that it might be used at the table where the President of the Methodist Conference had tea. Throughout that century until Auntie Mollie's death, members of the James family were involved in the life and work of the Chapel. Grandpa James was a Society Steward for many years.

Over the years, members of the Jones family also served in various ways. Grandma's cousin Robert Jones was a local preacher; Sunday School Superintendent and both he and his brother Arnaud were Society Stewards. In Llanelli, Gilliam John Jones was a preacher in Welsh and English and, in their time, his father John Johnson Jones, William John and the latter's daughters Margaret were Circuit Stewards. My father, William Wright James was Circuit Steward in Pontypridd, and also Trust Secretary and Treasurer. Mention has already been made of Guy Morris who became a Methodist Minister. In later generations some members of the family have become Anglicans and have continued their Christian Service in the Church of England. In Australia, the James families are Roman Catholics, and have been so, since the time of Evan James, whose wife, whom he met in Australia, was a Roman Catholic.

Of my generation the most active in Christian service has been Ken, who began Sunday School and Youth Work in Carmarthen, and in later years, wherever he lived, he served generously as a local preacher, teacher and as a worker with and for young people. I have done similar work, first in Pontypridd, then later with my husband Paul Brock, who is a Methodist Minister; with him I have served in the West Country and now in Nelson in Lancashire.

I believe we owe a great deal to earlier generations of our family. Grandpa and Grandma James were married for almost 50 years, and their four children were devoted to "Ma" and "Da" and went home to Carmarthen, whenever possible. In 1950, thirty years after Grandpa's death, my Father, then 75, went home to visit Auntie Mollie. He was out walking one day, and, as he crossed a road he noticed two men on the pavement, looking at him with interest. As he stepped on the pavement, he heard one man say to the other - "Nab James the Welshman. My father was thrilled that he should have been recognised as "the son of James, the Welshman. He and his brother and sisters inherited many of the gifts of their ancestors; both of his sisters were soloists in the choir, and when the National Eisteddfod was in Carmarthen in 1911, his sister Agnes was in the Choir and valued greatly the commemorative medal.

The two Brothers were very different in temperament, but nevertheless there was a close bond between them. My father was inclined to be cautious and rather conventional, with a very strict sense of loyalty and justice. On the other hand, his brother, Albert Owen (known as Bert) was an extrovert. He was a very sociable person; he knew everybody and everybody knew him. He, too, had a strong business sense, with a flair for organising and accepting responsibility. These qualities became evident during the years of the First World War. Having joined up at the outbreak of war, he rose to the rank of Regimental Sergeant-Major. He served in France and Italy. In the spring of 1918

he became a prisoner of war. As the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer in the camps, he assumed responsibility for the welfare of the men with him. This even led to his appearance as a witness at the local German law-court, during the prosecution of some of the guards, for the theft of Red Cross parcels, sent from Britain, thus depriving the prisoners in the Camp of much that would have made their lives there more bearable. He won his case, and after that the parcels arrived without interference.

They were not repatriated until 1919, and were then able to recount what had happened. In due course, letters of commendation were sent to him by the appropriate authorities, and he was awarded the D.S.M. (Distinguished Service Medal). The next year, 1920, he became a Freedman of the Borough of Carmarthen, an honour that he greatly cherished.



### **Cotbus Prisoner of War Camp**

His children and grandchildren have displayed this same spirit of enterprise and service to the community, and I hope that story may soon be written.

The actual surname James is now carried by only four of his grandchildren, and the only child bearing the surnamed James, is young Richard in Cornwall. So there are not many to carry it forward to the next century; may they do so worthily, what ever their surname.

## Chapter 2

Author: Kathleen Elizabeth Brook (Nee James)

### Some Tales from the Past and Childhood Memories

One day, long ago, two men were chatting, and during the course of their conversation, the one man said to the other, "And how many children have you, Mr Jones?" "Oh," replied Mr Jones, "I have eight sons and a sister for each of them." "Sixteen children!" exclaimed his companion, my word, you have a large family!" "No, no" rejoined Mr Jones, "not sixteen children. I only have nine children! I have eight sons and one daughter and she is a sister to each of her brothers!"

So went the story, as told me by my grandmother. Who was this Mr. Jones with his nine children? He was Grandma James' great-great grandfather, Daniel Jones, who was born in Carmarthen in 1730. Throughout a long life Grandma delighted in recalling stories and events from the past, and she took a lively interest in tracing and contacting the many descendants of Daniel. Some were in Carmarthen, but others had settled in Coventry, Birmingham, London, Port Talbot, Swansea and Llanelly.

I think this interest was stimulated by the fact that both her parents had died when she was young. (Her father was killed in 1854 during the Crimean War and her mother died two years later). Grandma therefore valued highly the companionship of her local cousins, and the contacts by letters or by visits with other cousins further away.

### Owen Young (1725-1799)

A contemporary of Daniel Jones was Owen Young, who was born in Pembrokeshire, in the parish of St. Issell, in 1725. Later he settled in Carmarthen. His wife, Jane, came from Llangwayder, Brecon. Their daughter, Mary, married Daniel Jones' son, John, and so began a close association between these two families. John and Mary Jones called two of their children Owen Young Jones and Jane Young Jones, thus reminding them of their grandparents' names. This recurrence of the name Young does not end with the grandchildren. It occurs in later generations. This prompts the question - "Who was this Owen Young, whose influence was such that parents wished to include his name when their children were christened?" Grandma's Mother was Mary Young Jones, and Grandma's younger son bore the name Owen, while her cousin, John Johnson Jones, of Deafen, Llanelly, named his younger son Owen Young Jones, and that was 150 years after the original Owen Young!

Correspondence with the Dyfed County Archivists Office has produced the information that "Owen Young, Gentleman, was admitted a burgess of the borough of Carmarthen in 1784". (Admission as a burgess was limited to those with freehold property). A letter written by Owen Young mentions the fact that he has moved to his new house, but, unfortunately, there is no mention of his address on the portion of the letters, which we still have. Another letter, written in the same year, 1791, to John Jones by his brother William, throws some light on the character of Owen Young. The letter was written in Bath, though it would seem that William Jones had been living in London, He now writes to his brother John, expressing deep sorrow and regret for some folly which he has committed; what that was we do not know, but it evidently involved money - perhaps he had invested unwisely, or lost money through gambling; but whatever it was, he is resolved to repay those who had so generously

helped him, for he wrote - "I am now able to repay the principal and the interest." Among those who had proved most helpful was Mr Young, whose advice he vowed to follow, and to whom he repeatedly expressed gratitude. That is all that we know of William Jones, but his letter certainly reveals something of the wisdom and generosity of Owen Young, and goes some way to explaining his widespread influence.

### **Changes in the Calendar**

When reading through the names of those born in the first half of the eighteenth century, it is interesting to note that some have the letters (O.S.) after their names, This is a reminder that they were born on or before the 2nd September 1752, according to the Old Style Calendar, That year the 3rd September became the 14th after that date would be following the New Style (the Gregorian) Calendar, as we do today. So, Mary Young's date of birth is given as the 24th July 1752 (O.S.), but her sister Anne's as the 11th December 1754 (New Style). We can well imagine that this adjustment to the calendar would have been somewhat disturbing to many people in those days, as they might have felt that they had lost 11 days of their lives!

### **Burial-grounds**

The early members of the Jones family were buried in the graveyard of the Welsh Wesleyan Chapel in Carmarthen, and Owen Young in the parish church, St Peter's. The James family who lived in Ferryside were buried in St Ishmael's Church. Later family graves are in the Carmarthen Cemetery.



**St. Ishmaels Parish Church**



St. Ishmaels Parish Church  
View from the churchyard

**Dr John Hughes, Carmarthen**

When Grandma and Grandpa James married in 1970, Dr John Hughes became the family doctor. In 1876-7 their eldest child, Mary Sarah (Auntie Mollie) contracted Scarlet Fever. She was nursed at home in isolation. The only other child in the family at that time was my father who was four years younger.

One day, after Dr Hughes had visited his young patient, Grandma returned to the sick room. The door was now ajar. Young Willie had crawled in and, to her horror, was drinking from a bowl of disinfectant, which stood in the room, and this was basically carbolic acid! Grandma quickly washed out his mouth with milk and gave him plenty of milk to drink and sent for Dr Hughes. When he arrived he said that she had acted correctly. Some time later, when Grandma was out walking with young Willie, they passed Mrs Hughes, with one of her daughters and they heard the latter say, "Look,

Mama, that is the little boy who drank the carbolic acid!" Fortunately, my father suffered no serious effects from "his carbolic acid"; he lived a full and active life, retiring at seventy-one!

Dr John Hughes' father was the Rev. Hugh Hughes, an early Welsh Wesleyan Minister, who, like John Wesley before him, suffered rough treatment during his early ministry. When he retired he settled with his wife in Spilman St., Carmarthen. His wife was a member of the influential family of Price, in Brecon. When Dr Hughes' son was born, he was given the names Hugh Price Hughes, a reminder of his grandparents' names. Dr Hughes' wife was the granddaughter of a wealthy Haverfordwest banker, a Jew, who became a Christian. Young Hugh Price Hughes valued greatly these two traditions in his family background. From the time he was fourteen, he resolved to become a Methodist Minister. At sixteen he began to preach, first in the little chapels at Llanstephan and Laugharne and in the Welsh Wesleyan Chapel in Carmarthen (his grand-parents being in the congregation!). This was in 1863, the following year, he preached in the recently built English Wesleyan Chapel.

In those days, the Oxford Colleges did not admit Nonconformists as Theology students. He therefore received his training at the Methodist Theological College at Richmond, Surrey. Throughout his ministry, he was known as a powerful preacher, and an ardent social reformer.

### **Preaching Appointments**

From the time of its opening in 1861, Grandma and her relations were very much involved in the work and worship of the English Wesleyan Chapel in Carmarthen. The last member of the James family was Auntie Mollie, who died in the centenary year, and this year, 1985, the membership of the Arnaud Jones family ended with the death in January of Nan Jones.

In the 1890's when my father was in his 'teens, there was sometimes an exchange of preachers between Carmarthen and the little Wesleyan Chapel in Llanstephan, eight miles along the west bank of the Towy estuary. Often on these occasions he would walk with the Carmarthen preacher for the first four miles along the road to Llanstephan., they would then be met by a pony and trap bringing the preacher from Llanstephan. He would then alight and he and my father would set off on foot for Carmarthen. Meanwhile the pony and trap would be turned round and the preacher from Carmarthen would then ride the last four miles to Llanstephan. When the evening came, the reverse process would take place, so for some; Sunday was a long and active day!

### **Family Photographs**

Family photograph albums can be a source of interest and of information, revealing strong family likenesses in succeeding generations, and showing, too, how fashions changed through the years. Before the development of photography as we know it today, there were silhouettes and later daguerreotypes. We have four silhouettes from the mid-19th century, or maybe a little earlier.

There is a full length one of Grandma James when she was four and a half years old. She was born in February 1847, so this silhouette can be dated 1851, so, too, the one of her Mother, Mary Young Wright (nee Jones) that was taken at the same time. It is possible that they were taken at the great Exhibition of that year, as they were living in London at that time, as her father's regiment was then stationed there. I know Grandma was very emphatic about her age when it was taken, but I do not remember whether she mentioned the place. The other two silhouettes would appear to be earlier but I do not know whom they represent, but from the differing styles of the caps worn, I would judge that they come from two different dates. There is a daguerreotype of Grandpa James' father,

David James, and also a larger one of David James with his two sisters, Esther Dyer and Sarah Morgan. Dating from about the same period of the late 1860's are two daguerreotypes, one of Grandma James and the other, I believe, of Grandpa James, when they were both aged about twenty.

When one turns to photographs taken in the 20th century, it is interesting to note how fashions have changed through the years. To the end of their lives, Grandpa and Grandma continued to wear the more formal dress of Victorian days. On Sundays Grandpa always wore a silk hat and frock coat and carried a silver-mounted ebony walking stick, and Grandma wore a bonnet and cape, or a long black satin coat, trimmed with jet. Grandpa lived until 1920 and Grandma until 1928. By contrast, my father no longer wore his silk hat and frock coat, and his sisters followed the fashions of Edwardian days. Wedding photographs illustrate these changing fashions quite well. The women's dresses are still long, but elaborately trimmed with lace and very fine tucks. One such dress would represent a dressmaker's work for a whole week. Hats were elaborately trimmed, often with feathers. The 20's and 30's of this century saw great changes in fashion, with simpler styles giving greater freedom of movement, with clearer brighter colours, and these changes have continued to the present day, with man-made fibres tending to replace silk, wool and cotton.

### **Changes in the home**

Along my earliest recollections of Grandmas home in Francis Terrace, Carmarthen, are the oil-lamps. These usually stood on a table, though on the staircase there was a bracket on the wall, and here an oil lamp was placed each evening, lighting-up the stairway and the Grandfather clock, which stood halfway up the stairs. Oil lamps gave a pleasant light, but involved daily cleaning and re-filling. When Grandpa and Grandma moved to Waterloo Terrace in 1913, they found gas and electric lighting already installed, so there was no longer the daily chore, which oil lamps had caused.

Kitchen fires were needed every day to heat the oven (at the side of the fire) and to boil water for cooking and cleaning. For these purposes, iron kettles and saucepans were used; these could be quite heavy to handle. When poultry or a joint of meat was to be roasted, the roasting-jack was used. The meat would hang on the hook and rotate in front of the fire. Beneath the joint would be a large roasting-pan, with a long-handled ladle for basting the meat. In her later years, when the family circle became very small, the roasting-jack would no longer be used, and the meat would be cooked in the oven, or in the gas cooker.

Modern heating and lighting with hot water systems, central heating and various electrical appliances have changed the nature of housekeeping in this second half of the 20th century.

### **Going to Market**

In my young days, "going to market" was a weekly occasion in Carmarthen. Each Saturday morning the farmers and their wives brought their produce to Carmarthen market. This was roofed over, but with open sides. There were long tables behind which the farmer's wives stood, and displayed their eggs, butter and poultry.

It was customary to take white cloths (often table-napkins) when going to market because in those days no wrapping paper was used. The chicken would be wrapped in a cloth, also the butter, although there was usually a piece of greaseproof paper round the pat of butter. These were in one-pound pats; each farm had its own design (a flower, a cow, etc.) stamped on the butter. (This was done with a wooden mould.) Sometimes eggs would be carried home in a basin. Quite often there

would be a certain amount of bargaining before a sale was completed; perhaps two shillings and nine pence would be asked, but only two shillings and three pence offered - a happy compromise would be reached and the bird would change hands at two shillings and sixpence (12.5p).

Grandma's advice was often sought by younger women, as she was a good judge of poultry. Conversation was mostly in Welsh, although most of the women were bilingual. In other parts of the market there would be fruit and flowers (in season), other sections appealed more to the farmers, for here they could buy harness and other farm equipment. Sitting outside, near one of the entrances were the cockle-women from Ferryside. They wore their traditional flat hats on top of a small woollen shawl (rather like a modern head scarf). I believe the cockles and mussels were measured out in pint and half-pint metal measures. Against the outer walls of the market, the butchers had their open-fronted shops.

"Going to market" was something one always did on a Saturday, although often it was not really necessary - it was an established custom each Saturday morning that Miss Jones, from Penhanc Farm, called at the house, before going to market, and she brought eggs, butter and poultry in her large basket; so anything that Grandma bought in the market was in addition to this! By the afternoon, the farmers and their dives would be preparing to return home. Many would have come by horse and cart along the roads leading into the town, others would have walked.

Along these roads there were inns, where the horses could be stabled and where refreshments were available. In the latter part of the nineteenth century there were about a hundred such inns. As the population of the towns was only ten thousand, it would seem that this was a towns of much drunkenness, but that was not so - the inns were needed for the care of the horses (undertaken by ostlers) and for refreshment for their owners.

On Wednesdays, there was a cattle market, when most of the animals bought and sold would walk to the mart. On Wednesday afternoons, a small number of women (mostly widows) were allowed to go to the Mart to milk the-cows before their journey home as it would be past milking-time when they reached their destination. The women could then dispose of any surplus milk they did not require for their families and so earned a few extra pence (I believe the milk was sold at a penny a pint).

One story was told of a farmer who was mean, and grudged the women receiving this free milk, so he refused to let his cow be milked. He set off for home, but because it was past the normal afternoon milking time, the cow became distressed and collapsed and died; a high price to pay for his meanness.

## **Childhood Memories**

When I recall my early childhood in Pontypridd, I realise it was a very quiet and happy time. In my first ten years, 1905-15, I suppose I spent a good deal of time on my own, but I was never lonely; as an only child, with no other children living near, I made my own pleasures. I had my own playroom with my dolls and teddy bear, my dolls house and my books. I enjoyed being read to, and thereby unconsciously memorised many nursery rhymes and stories. This proved to be an excellent preparation for my own reading as I became older. I did not go to school until I was six, which was probably a little unusual in those days.

I would have started school a year earlier, but there was no vacancy in the small private school, which my parents wished me to attend. This was an excellent school run by the Misses Porcher. They were

very gifted women, who made a valuable contribution to the educational life of Pontypridd and to the Methodist Church, of which they were active members. Many vivid memories remain of those days and of interesting and new experiences of holiday times. Of these, the earliest is of the summers when I went to Derbyshire for the first time. I was then only three years old and I travelled there with Grandpa and Grandma James and Auntie Aggie (my father's younger sister). It would have been quite a long train journey, but what I most remember about it was the fact that Auntie Aggie had brought with her a box with Dutch scenes on the lid, and when she opened it, and I looked inside it was full of strawberries, freshly gathered that morning in their Carmarthen garden. My father's sister Mollie had been married the previous September, so this was her family's first visit to her and Uncle Jack in their new home in Bolsover. Here I was introduced to a form of transport that was new to me - the pony and trap, Uncle Jack took us out to various places of interest, but as a three-year old I was fascinated by the smaller happenings!

One day, we went to Matlock, and my most vivid recollection of that day was of a monkey! Somewhere near the foot of Matlock Tor there stood some large cages, Probably part of a travelling menagerie. What attracted my attention was this little monkey in a very large cage, one end of which was partitioned off, as a sleeping quarter. When we arrived, the keeper was trying to persuade the monkey to leave the large section and go into the sleeping quarter - but it was broad daylight, and the monkey had no desire to go to sleep at mid-day! I can still hear that keeper coaxing the monkey and saying, "Note going to bed now – not going to bed now", but to no avail! Apparently he wished to introduce a second monkey into the cage, but wished to bring the two together only gradually, I do not know how the incident ended because the grownups had not come to Matlock simply to watch a monkey, but wished to explore further, so we moved on and climbed a little way up Matlock Tor.

On another day we rode through Sherwood Forest, and again my memory is of small incidences, one was standing inside the trunk of the Major Oak, and the other was watching pigs rooting under the trees for acorns and beech masts I think that, like most small children, my interest was caught by the smaller details, rather than the broad sweep of a lovely landscape or such fine buildings as Hardwick Hall which we saw as we passed through the Dukeries.

At last that delightful holiday came to an end, and I have to confess that on the last morning I refused to get up! I wanted to stay longer! Uncle Jack set off for the station with Grandpa and Grandma while the two Aunts coaxed me, and finally persuaded me to get ready, having promised that I should later receive a new hat for my doll! This duly arrived – it was a straw-hat trimmed with blue rouses! Fortunately we reached the station just in time to catch the train.

Throughout the years we often went to Carmarthen, and when I was older I spent most of the school holidays there. When in Carmarthen we went many times to Ferryside, the little seaside village eight miles from Carmarthen on the east side of the Towy estuary and opposite Llanstephan. As its name suggests, there was a ferry from Ferryside to Llanstephan; this was a small rowing boat, which had to be skilfully handled, as there were very strong currents. Grandpa James's family had lived in Ferryside, so he had many happy childhood memories of the Ferry as it was often affectionately called, and he loved returning there whenever possible.

When I was five years old I went again to Bolsover, this time with my Mother. My cousin Ken was also there and we were now old enough to enjoy playing with other children of our own age, and going out with Uncle Jack in the horse and trap. The horse was called Kitty and at the end of the day we would accompany Uncle Jack as he took Kitty from Hill Top where they lived, to the field

where Kitty spent the summer nights. Once the gate was opened Kitty would gallop round and round the field, and then roll over and over in the grass - sheer animal bliss!

In August 1919 the Welsh National Eisteddfod was held in Carmarthen, and I can remember being taken one morning to watch the Gorsedd Ceremony. Present on that occasion was a group of Bretons, in their national costumes. This was my first introduction to the people and costumes of Brittany; In later years I was to develop this interest during my several visits to Brittany. During the evenings there were concerts and Auntie Aggie was a member of the Eisteddfod Choir. Ken and I were allowed to stay up late and accompany Grandpa when he went to meet her at the end of the concert; throughout that week the weather was wonderfully warm and fine.

The following year I went for my third, and what proved to be, my last visit to Bolsover. I think I was there for about six weeks, and spent a great deal of time out of doors. In a letter to my parents I wrote; "I am writing this in the garden, and I am as brown as a berry". I often accompanied Uncle Jack when he visited the surrounding villages, and sometimes we all went to Sheffield or Nottingham, in the horse and trap, drawn by the faithful Kitty.

When I was six or seven I had my own copy of the Methodist Hymn Book and I seem to have acquired quite a repertoire, though whether I understood all the words is open to question! At bedtime I sang myself to sleep, and according to the grown-ups, they knew that when I reached a certain hymn I would be almost asleep! The hymn was "Brightly gleams our banner, Pointing to the sky, Waving on Christ's soldiers, to their home on high." I think its appeal probably lay in the opening words "Brightly gleams our banner".

At about this time I became a collector for Overseas Missions. My Sunday School teacher was Miss Mabel Coombes, who was also the Missionary Secretary, so no doubt it was due to her influence that I developed my interest in Overseas Missions. One evening Miss Coombes took the missionary collectors to another chapel in the circuit. This was a new experience for me. There were many more children there from other chapels and we all sat in rows on staging which had been specially erected. As one of the younger children, I sat on the front row. I do not remember what the visiting missionary said in his address, but at one point in the service the children sang a hymn; I have no recollection of having sung it before - it was the hymn "O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end", but as I joined in the singing that evening, the words struck me very forcibly and, young as I was, I took them as a personal commitment.

When I was eight years old I went with my mother to visit her cousin, May, in Brechfa, This is a village thirteen miles north-east of Carmarthen, and set in very lovely countryside. The house was where my mother's grandparents had lived and where she had spent much of her childhood. In those days there was no public transport to Brechfa and the road was very rough and deeply rutted. It was possible to go six miles from Carmarthen as far as Nantgaredig by train but after that folk either walked the remaining, seven miles, or were met by horse and trap. The postman came each morning on his bicycle and I believe the doctor came on horseback. This was a Welsh-speaking community, but although I knew no Welsh, at that time, I was still able to enjoy playing with the other children in the village. Language barriers do not trouble young children, they find ways of overcoming them! Staying in Brechfa and visiting various relations gave me my first experience of feeding farm animals - pigs, cattle and poultry, and watching (and helping?) to make the butter "come" in the churn.

One afternoon we went to visit some relations on one of the farms. As we reached the gate leading into the farmyard, we were surprised and rather startled to see a ram bounding across the yard

towards us – his head down in a most menacing manner! Fortunately, just then one of the family emerged from the house and called him. He went back to her quite quietly and we were able to cross the yard. Then we were told that this had been an orphan lamb, which had been reared by hand at the farm. Instead of joining the rest of the flock when old enough, he had stayed as a household pet and had joined the farm dogs in guarding the family.

Another afternoon I was sitting by the window reading. I happened to glance up and was surprised to see the young calf looking in! I ran out quickly, but the calf had already set off towards the nearby hump back bridge. As he reached the top of the bridge, I managed to grab his tail and turn him round, then we both ran back past the house (I was still hanging on to his tail!) By that time some of the grown-ups had appeared and were very amused to see what was happening. Some of them joined in the chase, and soon the adventurous calf was safely back in the field.

Most of the households in that community would have been fairly self-sufficient, having their own poultry, bacon, eggs, butter, milk, bread, fruit and vegetables. Other goods could be purchased in the village store, and during a visit to town.

That was my only visit to Brechfa. I understand that there are now better roads, a bus service, and that the area is in the process of being developed (?)

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The next year was 1914 and with the month of August came the declaration of war. Holidays were cancelled and many men joined the forces. It seems that at first people did not think that the war would last long. "It will all be over by Christmas" some said, but by Christmas the lengthening casualty lists warned people of what was to come, and soon anxiety and bereavement touched most families. In a way 1915 marked a watershed; life would never be the same, more and more men were called up; women went into industry; gradually motor vehicles replaced the horse and cart. Within the family, news came early in the year that my mother's brother had been killed in France. Then Eddie Coombes, my parents' friends' only son, died of wounds received in France, He was buried in Pontypridd, with full military honours, the first such funeral of the war. Later that year, a neighbour's only son, aged eighteen, died during the harsh winter conditions in the North Wales camp, where he was training.

As children we could not perhaps enter into all the grief and tragedy, but we were aware of much that was happening. I can remember reading in the newspaper of the sinking of the Lusitania by a German U-boat, with the loss of over a thousand lives. The remaining years of the war brought other tragedies within my father's family. Auntie Mollie's husband, John Hebb (Uncle Jack) was killed in 1917.



**John W Hebb**

Auntie Mollie then left Derbyshire and returned to Carmarthen, where she remained a widow until her death, forty-four years later. A few months later my father's brother, Bert, became a prisoner of war, having served from the outbreak of war in 1914.

At the outset of the war, my father had joined the Town Guard. This was made up of men in their 30's and 40's. At first they had no uniforms and very little equipment, later these were provided and they became known as the V.T.C. (The Volunteer Training Corps). They received intensive

training under army instructors and assisted in guard duty in such places as railway marshalling yards, gas-works, and Cardiff Docks. Later still they became the 6th Volunteer Battalion (The Welsh Regiment). As the war progressed, more and more men were called up according to their age groups. (This eventually extended to men aged 50).

In 1916 when my father was 41, he received his calling-up papers, and had to appear before a Medical Board in Cardiff. As he was apparently a very fit man, he expected to pass A1, but when the doctors examined him they discovered a defect in the valves of his heart, and he was rejected on medical grounds. This condition did not seriously worsen for several years; in fact, he served as Head (A.R.P.) Warden for the Town Ward, Pontypridd, throughout the Second World War, and it was only as he reached his seventies that he suffered severe heart trouble,

By the end of the war, I had entered the local Grammar School, where I spent six happy and successful years, leading on to University and Graduation. All that opened the door to new and varied experiences, which could provide another, and longer story than this!

I hope that what I have written so far may be of interest to the younger generations, for whom life is very different from my young days and from the days of Daniel Jones and Owen Young, with whom this writing began.



Kathleen E. Brook (nee James)  
Nelson (Lancs) 1985

