

JAMES REYNOLDS OF COWBRIDGE (1792-1872)

I began my search for my ancestor, James REYNOLDS, with his obituary which I had discovered through avenues suggested in Diane Brook's article, "Sources in Cardiff Central Library". The REYNOLDS family were from Cowbridge so I looked for references to the town in the card index of the "Local Studies" section which led to the "Glamorgan Observer and Monthly Illustrated Journal" February 1873, and there, near the beginning, was the headline:-

Y DIWEDDAR MR. JAMES REYNOLDS O BONIFAEN.

Dr. Brook had said the librarians were willing to help those unable to read Welsh and, sure enough, I soon had a brief translation of the notice of death and obituary which informed me that James was an outstanding man. I found the full obituary in "Y Haul" in the National Library and with a full translation of that, and references from other sources, I now have most of the story of his life.

James REYNOLDS was born in Cowbridge in 1792, son of James, a tailor, and wife Margaret (WALTERS). He learned his trade from his father and then left to work in Caerphilly where he married his first wife, Mary JONES, in 1815. Their first son, Thomas, was born there and when they moved to Briton Ferry, James, their second son, my great, great grandfather, was born in 1818. Moving back to Cowbridge, James began to establish himself as a solid business man and in 1825 he is recorded as having taken over the tenancy of land referred to as "Mary WILCOX's two acres" as well as the "open ground without South Gate of the town" (Cowbridge).

In 1825, with five children in his family, James was accepted as a member of the 'Cardiff Sympathetic Society'. This was one of the friendly societies in the area which existed to care for the widows of its members, mainly professional and middle-class men who were required to provide proof of age and good health and to pay a premium of five guineas. Yet it was not James who died but his wife Mary, after three more children, in 1830. With six children still to care for, James married Elizabeth HISCOCKS in 1835 but she too died, at the birth of their second daughter in 1837.

James was an active member of the Cowbridge Wesleyan Chapel and is named as its treasurer when it re-opened after being repaired in 1838. He began to keep the accounts in a small ivory-bound book which is now in the Glamorgan archives and his accounts and duties are recorded for the following ten years. I had thought that it was his pride that had led him to match the donation ten pounds from the Marquis of Bute when all the other donors gave five but, as we shall see, the writer of James' obituary suggests otherwise.

1838 was the last year James was recorded at a meeting of the Cardiff Sympathetic Society but at this time lodges of the Oddfellows (Oddyddion) were founded in Cowbridge: the St. Quentin lodge in 1837 and the Paradwys in 1839. It is likely that he began his work for them at this time; in their magazine a short obituary on his death describes him as 'well known and much respected' and notes that his 'portrait and memoir appeared in the magazine in October 1860'.

At our Open Day in Bridgend in 1991 I had another stroke of luck. I bought a copy of 'Llanblethian in 1851' and could hardly believe it when I read at the beginning:-

'On 31 March 1851, James REYNOLDS, a 59 year old auctioneer who lived at Bute cottage, Llanblethian, set off from his home to travel, probably on horseback, around the farms and cottages of the parish.....'

This is a study of the 1851 census and my James REYNOLDS was the enumerator. He had become an auctioneer and in the census he was married to Susan, aged 40, from Neath. The final section of that study follows the course that James took as he covered his designated part of the parish and comments: 'By the nature of his work as an auctioneer he would have had a good knowledge of the parish and its farms and appears to have made a systematic job of the enumeration.' In fact, Scammel's trade directory for 1852 lists him as a 'collector of income and property tax' so he was just the man for the job.

In the 1861 census his wife is named as Mary, born in Liswornly, Glamorgan, who was twenty seven years younger than James and they were probably married in the Wesleyan Chapel. They had, at this time, a daughter, Catherine, who was four years old, and Anne, one year old, who was his last child. James was then described as 'Tailor, draper, auctioneer and Wesleyan local preacher.'

Mary REYNOLDS, his wife, was buried in 1862 and he, a widower with two young children, married again though I do not know the name of his fifth wife; she was not at home on the day of the 1871 census when James and his daughters were recorded. I know she outlived him as she is mentioned in the obituary that appeared in 'Yr Haul', the Wesleyan publication, which states:-

'Mr REYNOLDS was married five times, his present wife also having been married twice before. He is survived by several children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His eldest son being Mr James REYNOLDS, a successful businessman in Caerphilly, while one of his grandchildren is Mr Alfred STOCKWOOD a respected lawyer practising in Pontypridd.'

But the obituary describes too his personality and the power of his preaching with such depth of feeling that it was surely written by someone who knew him well:-

'He was loved by all for his integrity and his ability.

His generous impulses endeared him to all under all circumstances, and actions which in others might appear extravagant were completely natural philanthropic gestures for him. In the various relationships of his life, both public and private, he ever upheld the essential dignity of man ... He was constantly looked up to as one who expounded and clarified the truths of the Holy Gospel and argued with all his power of persuasion the power of Christ crucified His joy and interest suffused every meeting in which he took part and formed the basis of his universal popularity.'

This is less than half of the obituary of one who must have been a remarkable man. If anyone would like the full text in English or in Welsh I will be pleased to send it, and I would like to hear from anyone who has further information on James REYNOLDS.

Sources of Information

- 1 Full obituary, Yr Haul January 1873
- 2 Diane Brook 'Sources in Cardiff Central Library' Glamorgan FHS Journal No. 25
- 3 'Llanblethian in 1851' Department of Extra-mural Studies, University of Wales, College of Cardiff
- 4 Minutes of 'Cardiff Sympathetic Society', Glamorgan archives D /DNMW 14
- 5 Account book of Cowbridge Wesleyan Chapel, Glamorgan archives D/DWes/B 32/3.

James REYNOLDS 1792 -1872 (Cowbridge)

His 'portrait appeared in the Oddfellows magazine in 1860



yours truly
Jas. Reynolds

4. James Reynolds I & II

When Elizabeth Morris vacated the house in 1813, the tenant was briefly a John Jenkin until 1814 (a). In 1814 James Reynolds I came to live at no 81, having moved from next door at no 79, where he had lived plying the trade of tailor (b). He continued with his business at no 81. The Reynolds were a large Cowbridge family and produced at least three tailors.

James I was born in 1764 and he married Margaret Walters in 1786 [c]. She was born in 1763, the daughter of Christopher and Margaret Walters. James I and Margaret went to

live at no 79 in 1788 [d] with their first child, Elizabeth, born in 1787. Whilst they lived in the house, several more children followed. Mary [1789], James II [1792], David [1795] [a]. Three more daughters, Margaret [1801], Anne [1807] and Sarah [1814] were born [a]. It may have been the arrival of Sarah which caused the family to move to the larger house at no 81.

For that period, Margaret was bearing children at a late age. She survived the move by only three years. She died in 1817, aged 54. James I survived her for many years and died in 1843, aged 79. They are both buried in Cowbridge churchyard. It would seem that right up to his death he was still operating his tailor's business as both he and his son, also James, are registered as Cowbridge tailors [e].

James I stayed on in the house until 1820.

Perhaps Elizabeth and William Morris were not very good landlords. In the last year of James Reynold's tenancy the rate on the house was reduced from four shillings to two shillings. It had always been four shillings since the first assessment in 1773. In the 1821 assessment the house is described as a ruin and only returns to four shillings in 1822 after Jenkin Morris has become the owner.

This provides us with the explanation of why the CADW listing describes a house of a much later date compared to the actual history (listing says early 19th century whereas this history shows house existing in the mid 18th century). To have achieved a doubling of the rates, Jenkin Morris would have carried out a major rebuilding of the house.

During the tenancy of James I, his son James II was in the house learning his father's trade of tailor. James II was to go on to be one of the 'larger than life' characters associated with the house. James II left Cowbridge to work in Caerphilly (f). There he married Mary Jones in 1815. She was born in 1793.

They very soon started to build what was to become James II's very large family. Daughter Jane in 1816, John in 1819, twin daughters Mary and Elizabeth in 1821 with the second twin living for only two months, Margaret in 1823, Thomas in 1824. The family moved back to Cowbridge in about 1825. Children continued to be born. David in 1826, a second Elizabeth in 1828 and Anne, who lived only three weeks in 1830. After nine children, their mother, Mary, did not survive for very long the death of her last child. Mary was buried in Cowbridge on the 14th February 1831, aged 37 (g).

James II started to raise his levels in society above that of a humble tailor. In 1825 he joined the Cardiff Sympathetic Society, which was a Friendly Society which helped widows. He extended this type of social work in 1838 by joining the Cowbridge branch of Oddfellows, the St Quentin lodge in 1837 and the Paradwys in 1839. At this time he was as active member of the Cowbridge Wesleyan Chapel when it reopened in 1838 after extensive repairs. He was then the treasurer and later was to become a lay preacher there (f). He is recorded as being the owner and occupier of 91 Eastgate in 1830 (l).

In the meantime James II continued to increase the size of his family. He raised the children on his own but four years after the death of his first wife, on the 19th April 1835, he married the thirty three year old Elizabeth Hiscocks of Cowbridge. She was the daughter of two Cowbridge shopkeepers, James and Catherine Hiscocks. Between 1852 and about 1857, James Hiscocks lived in a house on Primrose Hill, Cowbridge [h]. Elizabeth and her brother James had both been baptised on 27th May 1831, when she was twenty nine and he was thirty [g]. Elizabeth's brother bequeathed 89 Eastgate to her in 1836, but she died in 1838, leaving the property to her husband, James Reynolds II. (m

James Reynolds II had two children by Elizabeth (f), including Catherine Emma who was born in 1836 but lived for only eleven months (g). Elizabeth must have died and James II married again for the third time to Susan who was born in Neath in 1811 [i]. James II is now an auctioneer and 'Collector of Income and Property Taxes' [j]. For that year, he is also the Enumerator for the Census in 1851. At that date the couple were living at Bute Cottage in Llanblethian.

It is presumed that Susan died because in 1861 James II is married to Mary. They had two daughters, Catherine born in 1857 and Anne in 1860. James II had now clearly climbed the social ladder because he now lived in Great House in Cowbridge [now Williams the chemist] [k]. Two years later Mary died.

It would seem that James II married a fifth time. His obituary speaks, without giving a name, of a fifth wife who survived him. It had been her third marriage [f].

(a) *GLTR, Cowbridge, 1813*

(b) *Text for 79 High Street, Cowbridge, CRS 2000*

(c) *GFHCMB, Cowbridge*

(d) *GLTR, Cowbridge, 1788, GRO*

(e) *Pigot's Directory 1844, GRO*

(f) *Glamorgan Family History Society Magazine, No 35, January 1995. article by Mrs Jean Istance, a great, great, great granddaughter of James Reynolds I*

(g) *Cowbridge Parish Records, GRO*

(h) *Cowbridge Land Tax Assessments, 1821 to 1825, GRO*

(i) *Llanblethian Census, 1851*

(j) *Scammel 's Directory, 1852*

(k) *Cowbridge Census, 1861*

(l) *GLTR, 1830, GRO*

(m) *house deeds, 89 Eastgate, Cowbridge, in pte hands*

From church records – 1837 Marriage at Cowb. Parish church of Ann, daughter of James Reynolds tailor to Richard Aubrey cabinet maker, son of Thos Aubrey carpenter (see 91 Eastgate)

1840 Marriage at Cowb. parish church of Jane Reynolds dressmaker, dau of James Reynolds tailor to John Stockwood attorney's clerk, son of Thos Stockwood of Cowb.

"THE SUN"

The late Mr. James Reynolds of Cowbridge.

It is with feelings of sadness that we announce the death of the above named famous Christian, who passed away at Bute Cottage at the beginning of last month aged 81 years. As a worthy business man he earned the respect of his fellow citizens; he was loved by all for his integrity and his ability. His generous impulses endeared him to all under all circumstances; and actions, which in others might appear extravagant, were completely natural philanthropic gestures for him. In the various relationships of his life, both public and private, he ever upheld the essential dignity of man; and the inner strength he possessed was nurtured from his constant dedication to truth and to his high ideals in matters pertaining to the fundamental principles of life.

He was both actively involved in high society and yet was at the same time a true friend to the poorest in the community.

As a preacher he belonged not only to his own denomination but was also respected by all churches throughout most of Wales as well as in many towns and cities in England. He was a serious and eloquent preacher and one often saw his congregations with tears coursing down the cheeks of his listeners as his clear powerful voice proclaimed "the utmost suffering and the sweat of blood". As one recalls the many activities of his life it is impossible in this brief note to do justice to all the

many interesting facets which illuminated the character of the late Mr James Reynolds. At the same time he possessed deep and godly insights, virtues which made his life one of humour and serenity so that he was welcome wherever he went. He was particularly popular in friendly societies and fellowship meetings, his name being specially remembered in the numerous lodges of the Oddfellows in the Cowbridge area. It is not too much to say that he was the mainstay of the society in the area, and consequently his funeral was attended by a vast number of the members. Mr. Reynolds was an adornment of society in general and many have described him as one whose thoughts appeared well in advance of their time. He was always and in all places an extremely popular man - on the platform as a speaker, in the private transactions of societies, in the pulpit, in business discussions in the world of commerce, or in his ministrations at the funeral of some respected friend when his tributes were eloquently delivered. He was constantly looked up to as a one who expounded and clarified the eternal truths of the Holy Gospel and argued with all his power of persuasion the power of Christ crucified. He was the life and soul of every fellowship meeting - whether the business proved lively or tranquil, simple or involved. His joy and interest suffused every meeting in which he took part and formed the basis of his universal popularity.

Mr. Reynolds death will prove a major loss to so many societies. He held every position in the Oddfellows and also in the Foresters. He was a delegate for many years to the national meetings of these societies and he was the publicity secretary of the Oddfellows to the end of his life. Throughout his life he was a firm friend also of the Established Church and although many of his fellow Wesleyans turned their backs on that denomination he remained a true friend to the end, his last public communion being at Llanblethian Church shortly before his death. Mr. Reynolds was married five times his present wife also having been married twice before. He is survived by several children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, his oldest son being Mr. Thomas Reynolds a

successful businessman in Caerffili, while one of his grandchildren is Mr. Alfred St ockwood, a respected lawyer prctising in Pontypridd and well known to readers of "The Sun". His passing was quiet and peaceful, and he departed firm in his Christian hope, surrounded by his friends and relatives. Farewell therefore to the tender father of his children, to the powerful and sincere preacher, and to the true friend of all who knew him.

"Requiescat in pace. Resurgam"

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THE FAMILY of JAMES REYNOLDS of COWBRIDGE

July 15 1786 James Reynolds (Senior) married Margaret Walters
He died 17 / 6 / 1843 She died 26 / 10 / 1817

Their children:

- (1) **James born 1792, became a tailor** (2) Anne b. 1794 m. Thos. Evan 6 / 10 / 1810
- (3) Margaret married William James 17 / 6 / 1824
- (4) Thomas born 1804 died 1884

THE MARRIAGES of JAMES REYNOLDS born 1792

First marriage:- 15 / 5 / 1815 James m. Mary Jones - St. Martins, Caerphilly.
She died 1830

Their children: 1) Thomas born Caerphilly

- * 2) James born Briton Ferry 1818
- 3) John born 21 / 4 / 1819 married Elizabeth (he became a tailor)
- 4) Elizabeth born 17 / 2 / 1821 buried 21 / 4 / 1821
- 5) Margaret born 2 / 1 / 1823
- 6) David born 6 / 10 / 1826 buried 16 / 1 / 1829
- 7) Elizabeth born 2 / 5 / 1828
- 8) Anne born February 1830

Their mother Mary was buried 14 / 2 / 1830. Aged 37

Second marriage:- 19 / 4 / 1835 James m. Elizabeth Hiscocks
(She was born 21 / 6 / 1802 the daughter of James and Catherine Hiscocks)

Their children: Catherine born 23 / 5 / 1836, died 26 / 2 / 1837
Anne born 1837

Third marriage:- James married Susan born in Neath 1811
buried in Cowbridge 10 / 8 / 1851 (Info. from 1851 census)

Fourth marriage:- James married Mary

Their children: Catherine Emma bapt. 11 / 8 / 1856
Anne born 1859

These daughters are listed as living with their father in Bute Cottage in the 1871 Census.

Fifth marriage:- His last wife outlived him but was not at home for the 1871 census so was not named.

However it is possible that he was married between the death of Elizabeth and his marriage to Susan but I have found no record of the name.

James Reynolds died in 1872

* James married Mary Griffiths — they were my great, great grandparents



yours truly
Jas. Reynolds