

The following story in verse , starting from (it's 1861) is factual and concerns Abraham James the father of James Thomas James, who married Dianah Roser, the daughter of William Roser and Susannah Roser nee' Hannett.

" ABRAHAM JAMES EXPIREE "

How do I write what I feel in my heart for the boy who started my life, a sixteen year old with a heart of joy and simply a zest for life.

He was the youngest son of a blacksmith father and a mother who's heart broke in two, on the day the judge said I'm sending him, to the Swan River Colony.

They put him in irons and on to a ship, that one called " William Jardine ". She said please don't take him he is my son and I know I'll not see him again.

He left her behind with this thought in mind, look what I've done to my father and mother. Please, don't make me go, I don't want to go, to that place they call Australia. I want to stay here in this land Wales, please let me go home to my mother.

But no one heard they put him on board with 212 other convicts. He did not know what lay ahead and he didn't believe that God did. He got angry and cried, and then decided, Tsk! I know what I'll do. I'll sit and I'll stand, I'll even crawl if they ask me to. I've got ten years to serve and when I've done that, what the heck I'll be free and then I'll go home I'll show them, how can they ever hurt me.

It's 1861 and I'm free, I'm free. I don't have to account to anyone, I can walk the street, I can fire a gun without someone saying, " Hey you ", it's ten oclock are you bond or free? I don't give a fig for no one.

But I've learned a lot in the time that's past, between my trial and the now, I won't rob or fight or willingly be, the cause of any more misery.

Just sometimes I think of mother and Elizabeth wrote me about home. It's the first news I've had in ten years, but I'm not going back now. I've had a fair deal from the man by the name of Francis Gregory.

He chose me you know to be part of the party that's going to " Nicol Bay ". I'm a man of importance on the " Dolphin ", I look after the horses, I'm the farrier and I'm free. It's the 16th of May 1861 and we have arrived, we are busy unloading the horses, when Gregory said " Abe " pass this gun I was only to willing to oblige, but wouldn't you know it, I blew it, I blew it, I've shot the mate in the bum.

The next day I worked and I worked, shoeing horses all day in the sun, trying hard too redeem what Gregory had seen, when he asked me to help him explore, this land far up north, which England had thought would be good for the cotton industry. I am praying God help me, just give me the chance to prove my real worth.

The mates okay, thank God for that, he's only got a flesh wound and the Captain Mr Dixon, he's quite good at fixing matters such as this, he'll have him well in no time at all, just you wait and see. But tell me Mr Dixon, how good are you at fixing a man with a very hurt pride?.

We are back in Fremantle and I'm calling to see, that redheaded girl of Hitchcock's, she lives on the Swan at Janes Brook, the place with the bridge across. Her names Mary Ann and as soon as I can, I'll say marry me please Mary Ann. I dont she'll mind that I, once was a ticket of leaver, she'll see past that she's Colony born and she knows I came too help them regain, what little was left of the West. But why am I frightened? I know it's her father, you see he came here free, my heart says go but my mind says no, he might knock me back, I couldnt stand that, for you see I'll never truly be free.

I'll never forget the look on his face, when I asked could I wed his daughter. I'm sure he knew the fear I felt, waiting for his answer. It felt like a year when I heard him say, "Tell me son what can you give her?", my heart beat so fast and I heard my self say, "Sir right now I can only love her". But the days going to come when I'll build a home and give her the comfort she's used to. He said well my boy I'll give you this gem, if you promise to honour and love her, she'll be a good wife if you treat her right, I know her she's my daughter.

My heart sang with joy as I went my way, I wish I could tell my mother. Ah! there's no time for that, I've a lot too do, a house to build and a job to do, "Strike me pink I'll have to court her, before she'll say I do". I've bought some land in Toodyay, it's all of twenty acres. William Lennan came by it as a pepper corn grant for services to the Army. On the deed it says he was granted it by Governor John Stephen Hampton, it also says that Hampton was trusty and beloved, but I don't believe a word of that, after all he was once a Comptroler General.

I've hired some men, their ticket of leavers, I pay them £1.0.0. a month, between us were building stone fences, there to be used as holding yards when I set up my shop. I have chosen a spot on top of the rise to build a two roomed house, I dont have to by material, this place is covered in rock. Annie said she does not mind that the floors will be just dirt. There is really only one name for it and that's "Rocky Farm".



I've taken two days off, the day's finally here, it's June 23rd 66, Bishop Hale gave us a special licence and we must be married, between eight and twelve in the forenoon. Without this you see there's restrictions on me, Who wants to sign along side his bride "Abraham James Expiree".

We were married in the church at Middle Swan, among Annie's family, but really it was just Annie and me. I was so proud of my beautiful bride as she promised to love and obey me. I never thought of the home I had left, only of the one she would make me.

It's May 67, I have a son I called him Charles for my father. He was born at Mill Farm, he'll be my right arm, Oh thank you Annie I love you.

The Business has boomed since 65 more than I dreamed it would there's horses to be shod, wheels to tyre to say nothing for the teeth I extract, I do the blood letting and make branding irons which have to be registered with the Government. For all this I'm paid by cash or kind and on the side I do a small trade. Tom Bourke came today, he paid five pigs to the value of thirty shillings, next week he'll come to clear his slate, with barley for thirty four shillings.

At night when I sit by the fire, having a pipe or two after work, I hold my son Edward to me, "he's crippled you see." I hold him much closer and look all around me and this is what I see. There's Annie reading her Bible to Charles, William, Abe and Tom, Mary Ann Kate and Lizzie are doing embroidery and Emma, well she is just listening to the sounds of her family. I wish I'd had faith that day on the dock, to believe that God does go before.

I look at my Annie she's worked hard these years, she's born me nine children, eight in these two rooms she's such a good wife, Oh thank you Annie I love you. William Ashurst has asked to lease my small lot, I want ten pounds per Annum, he's happy to pay the price I've asked so I'm taking Annie to Toodyay to live in town.

We have chosen a site by the river it's location 5 and everyone is working including little Kate, she's carting mud in a bucket from the banks of the Avon, for me to make the Batts. Annie can see her five roomed house taking shape before her eyes, it's even got a cellar she's very happy with that.

The house is finally finished and we call it "Finger Post" because it's at the junction of the Northam and Guildford roads. It points the way for travellers, they always call in here. And wouldn't you just believe it we have another son, I named him John Farr James for my mother, she was a Farr before she wed, I'm sure she would be proud of me if she could see, the life I've made for Annie and for me.

Annie I'm sick, get Dr Hickinbotham and when you've done that bring John to me there's something I want to tell him. Your fourteen

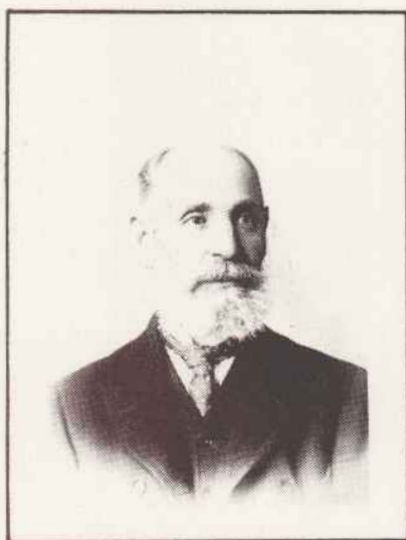
my son and your time has come to take care of your mother, don't leave her alone not even if you want to marry, I can't tell you why I don't have the time, as a matter of fact don't ask me, just promise me son you will always be strong don't fall into temptation.

John didn't want to part with him but he had to say goodbye, he knew it's God who sets the time. He carried out his father's wish he never did get married, he loved his mother dearly and she lived to be ninety six.

Next time you go to Toodyay and you pass the grave yard there, call in and search until you find an epitaph that reads, 5.2.1901, Abraham James son of Charles of Monmouthshire Wales, just stay awhile and spend some time, there's a lesson to be learned. Think about the boy who started my life all those many years ago. He ran the race and ran it well, I am so proud of him.

Jan Young

2.2.1980



Abraham James.



Mary Ann James  
nee' Hitchcock.



Janice Mary James.