

Chapter 1: Grandparents and the Brewer's House

I was never fortunate enough to know my grandparents, the Bambers, on my father's side, or the Chapmans, on my mother's side, and so I had to rely on what I was told by my parents and my Uncle Jim and my Aunt Jemima.

My grandfather Bamber was born about 1830. He covered the area around Addlington and surrounding districts on horseback to deliver the post and mail, and was called on at times to assist the police. According to my old aunt, who we called Aunt Mima, he was also called on to entertain by the local farmers, by reason of his prowess as a clog dancer. He was especially in demand at the end of the Harvest gatherings at the old public houses where the farm people and helpers came to celebrate the finish of their tasks at the famers' expense by drinking, singing and dancing until the late hours.

I know very little about my grandmother, apart from her maiden name, which was Cornish, and that she was mother to my six uncles, the eldest being my Uncle Jim and the youngest my father Joseph.

My Uncle Jim divided his working time between farming and looking after horses and ponies. Travelling into Derbyshire one time, he met a girl in service at some big house. Her name was Jemima Cresswell. He courted her and later married her, then moving around in search of a permanent job, he finally landed at the old Collins Green colliery as a furnaceman. The furnaces were at the base of the shaft, or draft, causing the hot air to rise, drawing the cool air down the other shafts, thus providing fresh air and ventilation. After this, on realisation of his skill with doctoring ponies at the colliery, they made him Head Pony Man, and eventually he moved from Berrys Lane, Sutton, to the Bank House Cottage, alongside Bank House, Bold, to serve as Farm Bailiff for Collins Green and Bold collieries. The farmyard stables etc. were positioned there, about fifty yards from Forshaws the Brewers along the lane.

Apart from farming, he was responsible for the horse drawn ambulance, which was kept in the carriage room, and on many occasions I sat alongside him on the high seat, going to Peasley Cross and Providence Hospitals. Gone now is the picturesque pebbledashed cottage with its low slung wooden beams straddling the ceiling where my Uncle Jim's guns hung either side; the shining black fireplace with its oven and the cheery coal fire; the crickets singing behind the fireplace; the back kitchen with its pantry with the great long stone slab where my Aunt used to divide and carve the pigs up, skin the hares and rabbits and clean the partridges and fowl. Gone too are the large garden with its vegetable patch and flower garden; the high south looking wall covered with Dorothy Perkins; the old well with its syphon pump; the three large water butts to catch the rain water off the cottage roof, standing between cottage and garden; the fowl and the tame rabbits in their sheds at the rear of the garden. From a tender age, I spent weeks there out of my school holidays. How well I remember it all - the gardens, the dogs, the pets, the fields, blackberrying, the rides on the farm carts, feeding the last of the pit ponies and Old Bill. He was almost blind and was returned to the field to finish his days off after a lifetime down the pit pulling boxes of coal. He was a great favourite with us all, and we all felt for him.



James Bamber 1856-1917. Died aged 61 years and Jemima Bamber 1859-1944. Died aged 85 years

James Bamber was a farm bailiff for Collins Green and Bold Collieries, working there for 39 years. He was also the furnace man, head pony man and farm bailiff.

My old aunt was more than that to me. She was more like a Grandmother. Although she was no more than five feet tall, she was extremely active. She dug and tilled the large vegetable garden and produced the sage to supply our neighbours around Edgeworth Street and Ellen Street. My mother took orders from them for bunches of flowers and bunches of sage. My brother Fred and I used to walk up Bold and back home again with the washing basket full at weekends. We delivered to the people around us.

My aunt's interest and activity in the garden never interfered with her housekeeping. The interior of the cottage was always spotless. She also had time to knit samplers which hung on the wall giving dates and names of her family and when they were born.

She was between eighty and ninety, living then at Yew Tree Farm, Penny Lane, Collins Green. On doctor's advice she had to be brought inside the farmhouse, out of her beloved garden.

In Addlington, in the year 1874, my father was born. At an early age, he went to school in the morning and worked in the mill in the afternoon. He left school at twelve years old and was later orphaned, coming to live with my Uncle Jim and Aunt Mima at Bank House Cottage, Bold around 1890. He started work at Bold Colliery as a hooker-on at the pit bottom. The hooker-on is the man in charge at the pit bottom. He sees that the cages are correctly loaded with coal boxes, withdraws the empty boxes and signals directions to the winder above. He also searches the mineworkers on their exit for contraband, cigarettes, matches, pipes etc... He also picked up the know how on rope splicing and later maintained the wire haulage ropes, inspecting and ordering wire ropes from Glovers Ropery at Liverpool Road, Greenbank. He later became fireman and Head fireman or Underlooker, and then Undermanager.

My father met and married my mother, Maud Beatrice Chapman. She was the saleswoman and manageress for Griffins Furniture shop on the corner of Westfield Street and Ormskirk Street., next to the Griffins Picture House called the "Scala", where Kwik Save now stands.

The sideboard, a lovely piece of furniture at home, was a showpiece from Griffins Shop. It was presented to my parents as a wedding present on the occasion of their marriage.

My other grandparents, the Chapman's, had their own glassworks in the last century, but Pilkington Glass works bought them out. The bill of sale was kept in a small mahogany set of drawers at our house in Edgeworth Street, detailing the sale of horses, ponies, floats, forges, furnaces and buildings. I regret I cannot find any trace of this bill but somewhere in the break-up of our family it disappeared. The lovely hand cut glass and tableware that was left to my mother and kept in the tall fireside cupboards, were brought out twice each year, washed and dried until they sparkled on the table. It was beautiful to look at. Some of it was coloured.

My Dad took it with him to Leicester, when he went to live with my youngest sister Doris. I believe it was sold in the city.



Mrs Maude Beatrice Bamber (nee Chapman) 1875-1928. Died aged 53 years. Worked as a saleslady and manageress of Griffins Furniture Store in Westfield Street and Ormskirk Street, St Helens. This photograph was taken c.1900

My parents lived in an old house in Orville Street, where a son was born named Harold. He died before he was twelve months old. They moved to 64 Edgeworth Street, a parloured house, where my brothers and sisters were born.

The Brewer's House

Where was "The Brewer's House", the house where Jim Forshaw, the founder of the Burtonwood Brewery was born?. It now goes under the name of Yew Tree Farm and stands on the corner of the junction of Penny Lane, Back lane and Bold Road, just outside the Brewery itself.

The friendship between the old Forshaw family and my own goes back to the last century. The close proximity of Bank House and its two cottages with the brewery explains this. My cousin, Jim Bamber, who was foreman fitter at Bold, turner and locomotive fitter, maintained and repaired the pumps of the brewery when Bold and Collins Green colliery passed into the hands of Sutton Heath and Lea Green Collieries and later on became nationalised. The farming had ceased. My Uncle Jim had died, and Nellie Bamber married William Gleave, who succeeded my uncle as farm bailiff.

The Forshaws found a way out for them by allowing them to move into Yew Tree Farm as farmers. The land belonged to and still is Forshaws, and my cousin Nellie, known as Mrs Gleave, was told by the Forshaws that she could live there until the end of her days as she was the last one of her family. My father lived there after my mother died as we had all split up and got married.

On the wall inside the kitchen of "The Brewer's House" was a large picture of old Mr. Jim Forshaw, with top hat and wearing sideburns, portraying a real old English gentleman. He established the brewery in 1867.



Joseph Bamber 1874-1946. Died aged 72 years. Worked as Undermanager and Underlooker at Bold Colliery. This photograph was taken c.1890