

What Happened to James?, by Roy Davies

(Dec 2004, pp 162-163)

Although I have been researching Family History since the late 1980s there were still lessons I was going to learn in 2004.

I had traced my paternal great grandparents back to the early 1800s. They had travelled about a fair bit and lived in various Counties. There were still, however, gaps to be filled. And one of these related to my great uncle JAMES DAVIES who was born at Hopton Castle in South Shropshire 19th April, 1877.

By the early 1800s the family had moved to Market Drayton in North Shropshire and settled there for their remaining years, living at the Newtown, opposite to the swimming pool. James was listed on both the 1881 and the 1891 census returns. He was also listed as a witness at the marriages of his sisters in 1897 and 18098. Both marriages took place at Market Drayton.

At this point the trail went cold.

CAROLINE, the mother of James, died in 1902. Both she and her husband THOMAS ANTHONY DAVIES who died in 1885 are buried in Little Drayton Churchyard, also in North Shropshire. There is a gravestone, well-preserved, with a verse thereon which suggests it was instigated by James.

When the 1901 census became available I felt confident that I would find James. The temperature started at this point to slowly rise. However, many hours were spent on the census searching for James but I was unable to locate him.

The temperature was turning ice cold.

Again I was posing the question, "What happened to James?" I decided to abandon the search for James for now and focus on other things such as the Peace Celebrations in Market Drayton in 1919. There is, however, a saying which goes something like this 'if you've lost something it will usually turn up in the most unlikely of places.' Read on.

In early 2004 I visited the *Clive Library* in Market Drayton with a view to researching local newspapers in connection with the Peace Celebrations. Accompanying me was my wife Christine. She had not been able to find what she was looking for and had time on her hands. She decided to look through some index cards which were conveniently placed alongside the film reader that I was using. Suddenly, after only a short time of searching, Christine drew my attention to one of the index cards. Yes, you have guessed it. The search for James starts all over again.

Now what the index card referred to was a JAS DAVIS (note spelling). It also related to two dates, one in 1900 and the other in 1904, concerning pages in *The Newport and Market Drayton Advertiser*. Wait for it: it also referred to the Boer War, which as we know was between 1899 and 1902.

By searching the relevant newspapers I was able to answer some of the questions as to “What happened to James” after 1898.

The Moral of this Story is:

- (a) Search locally for what was happening around the time you have lost someone.
- (b) Search Nationally to discover what was going on in the World at the relevant time.
- (c) Use your local library as a source of research. (for instance Index Systems)
- (d) make use of Local Newspapers.

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