



Diaspora Stories

Ancestor's Name: JAMES EDWARD LEVIS
Place of birth (if known): SKIBBEREEN, Co CORK
Your Name: PATRICIA STAPLETON
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As Attached

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I agree to submit this story for publication by Skibbereen Heritage Centre.

Signed: Pat Stapleton

Date: 29/6/2020

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James Edward LEVIS was born on 12 March 1873 in Skibbereen, Cork. At the time of his birth, his father, John Joseph LEVIS was 26 and his mother, Julia Anne (nee McCARTHY), was 24. James was the second oldest of 13 children.

On 25th September 1901 in Abbeystrewry Church, Skibbereen, James married Gertrude May BINYON, whose father Joseph was a land steward on the Liss Ard Estate. On their marriage certificate, James' occupation is shown as shopkeeper, at 4 Bridge Street, Skibbereen.

James and Gertrude's first child, Isabel Mary Barber LEVIS was born on 19th August 1901, and baptised at Abbeystrewry Parish Church on 14th September 1902.

In October 1902, James, Gertrude and baby Isabel travelled to Kimberley, South Africa where James worked in the diamond mines. Two more children were born there, Eric Robert on 3rd August 1904 and Cecil Forbes on 23rd October 1908.

The photograph of James (above) was taken in Kimberley around 1906.

Sadly, Gertrude died in South Africa on 22nd May 1909 (exact place and cause of death unconfirmed).

Following Gertrude's death, James and his young family returned to Ireland. In the 1911 census, the children were living with his parents John and Julia at Highfield, Creagh (between Skibbereen and Baltimore). James was recorded as a farmer, also at Highfield.

In April 1911, James was married for a second time, to Marie Harriett Sunfield OTT. The marriage took place in Eastbourne, Sussex and Marie (known as May) was from Kimberley, South Africa. (Unsure why they were married in Sussex unless perhaps May had relatives there.)

James and May lived at Kimberley House, Highfield (the house name obviously chosen due to their connection to Kimberley in South Africa). On 29th June 1914, their only child, a son named Harold Alfred LEVIS, was born in Skibbereen. Sadly, May passed away in early 1915, at the age of 33 and is buried in Creagh Cemetery.

In early 1918, there is a record of James selling his property (Kimberley House) by auction. The estate comprised over 200 acres with farm buildings, and was situated four miles from Skibbereen and 5 minutes' walk from the Creagh Railway Station. The sale included the house, described as "a new ton-slatted modern residence, containing drawing and dining rooms, 4 principal bedrooms, entrance hall and porch, large kitchen (with hostess range), scullery".

James then moved to Liverpool, where he established a Motor Garage. It is not clear where his children were at this time (Isabel would have been about 15, the 3 boys under 10.) They may have stayed with James' parents, or perhaps other relatives. It appears they eventually moved to Liverpool to be with their father, as Isabel married there in 1922. Electoral records from the 1920s and 1930s indicate that all three boys were living with James in Liverpool and working in the transport industry.

On 13th April 1919, James married again, this time to Catherine CAMERON. The wedding took place at St Bride's Church, Liverpool. The wedding certificate shows that Catherine was from Park Parish, Glasgow.

On 25th August 1920, their only son, Cameron James LEVIS was born (Cameron was James' fifth child and fourth son).

Catherine died in 1934 and is buried (with James) at Aintree Cemetery, Liverpool.

James went on to live a long life, and passed away in 1964 at the age of 92. He had outlived three wives, his daughter Isabel and nine of his siblings.

James was my partner's great-grandfather, and his daughter Isabel was my partner's grandmother.