

Benjamin Williams my grandfather was born Briton Ferry 1862. His parents were Griffith Williams (1823- 1893) and Cecilia Thomas (1824-1869). His siblings were (David; Margaret; Thomas; Jane (1); Jane (2); Griffith; Benjamin and William)

He was baptised in 1868, aged 6 along with 3 other siblings. This is unusual as generally the baptism took place in the first year of the child's life. There appears to be no reason for this delayed baptism in the case of my grandfather. Why had a sibling died? Jane (1) (1855-1857)

Benjamin was born into a family of numerous generations of river pilots. For some unknown reason Benjamin at the age of 10, started working in the Steep Coal Measures, Neath -Briton Ferry District. By 1881 the census listed him as being a miner in the Pontycymmer area of the Garw Valley. He married in 1886 to Cecilia Thomas, born in Mountain Ash 1867. By 1889 he was in Maerdy, while their children were born in the Garw Valley. In 1901 he and his wife and seven children (David Griffith; Mary; William Thomas; Benjamin; Elizabeth; Ivor and Stanley) lived at 18 Griffith Street, Maerdy.

He worked days in the mines and attended night school in Ferndale gaining his mining certifications and mining examinations.

He mines he worked in were -

1884-1902 Merthyr Stream Coal Collieries in Maerdy Collier; Timberman; Contractor and Official

1893 Night Fireman 6 Foot Seam, North West, Maerdy

1902 saw Benjamin and family in the Gold Coast (Ghana). Benjamin worked in gold mines over the next three years, rising from gold prospector to Temporary Manager of the mines.

1902-1905 as a prospector, Mine Foreman and Master Sinker in Ghana

- 15 months Chida Wassaw Company
- 10/03/1903 appointed Temporary Manager
- 17/12/1903 reference worked at Chida Wassaw mine for one year
- 9 months Prestea Company Block A Gold Mines
- 12 months Chida Wassaw Gold Mines Company

1905-1907 1st Class Certificate Manager The Lower Gilfach Colliery

1907-1909 Under manager at Cynon and Whitchurch Collieries, Cymmer, Port Talbot.

1910 Married Florence Potter Hampstead London

1909-1911 Manager at Llanover Pits, Argoed.

According to a newspaper report of 1912 (mentioned later) - in 1911 his wife and family were living in Aberbargoed.

August 1912, Benjamin was in Sumatra, working in the Gold Mines.

In September of that year, 'there was an accident and numerous local boys were trapped' and Benjamin, the *only Englishman* there, said they had to be rescued and led the successful rescue mission. As a consequence of this bravery he was promoted to Mine Captain. (South Wales Echo report, September 1912).

08/1911 Lebong Donok Gold mine, Sumatra

1912 Lebong Soelit Gold mine, Sumatra

Lebong Tandai (Simau) Gold Mine, Sumatra

A couple sons, from his first family, were also miners and worked with their father in the Sumatra gold mines:

WILLIAMS David Griffith 1920 Southampton Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)

WILLIAMS Stanley 1927 Southampton Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)

From ships' passenger records it appears that Benjamin travelled back to Wales every five years. Details for Benjamin's journeys out from England:

WILLIAMS Ben 1911 Southampton Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)

WILLIAMS Benjamin 1915 London Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)
WILLIAMS Benjamin 1922 Southampton Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)
WILLIAMS Benjamin 1928 Southampton Indonesia Jakarta (Batavia)

In a 1913 Who's who for the Dutch East Indies it says:

"Adresboek van geheel Nederlands-Indië 1913":

Williams, B. - Empl. Mijnbouw Maatschappij Redjang Lebong, Lebong Donok.

Williams, B. - Employment. My construction society Redjang Lebong, Lebong Donok.

Benjamin had a British passport, number 1, issued in Batavia in 1915 (07/04/1915)

Second passport number 362 issued in Batavia 09/08/1926.

This passport has a rider stating 'no need for visa to Dutch East Indies'. However, in 1928 he was granted a visa!

In 1925 the address listed in the record of travelling back to Batavia was Blackwood, Monmouthshire.

By 1928 Benjamin owned the Tennis Court Hotel, Bridgend. Though a letter suggests he was a part owner, the business card does say Benjamin Williams.

In November 1928, he was on route to Australia via the Suez Canal and landed at Fremantle and then Sydney. He was travelling with Miss E.E.M Williams (my grandmother). In 1929 he bought a grocery business located at 58 Tennyson Road, Gladesville, Ryde, North Sydney, New South Wales. The local electoral register lists a Mr and Mrs Williams at this address for 1930 and 1931.

My father Howard Griffith Williams was born 11th July 1929, birth certificate says parents were married 14th February 1927 in Bridgend (checking with the local registry office, they can find no evidence of this marriage).

Benjamin travelled back to South Wales in 1930. At 4 Lewis Square, Upper Abercanaid. May and Howard travelled back later in 1931. By now May's passport had been crudely altered by overwriting 'Miss' with 'Mrs.' in a different blue ink. It said Mrs E.E.M Williams but strangely it mentions one child, a boy deceased why? Was this Richard no one ever mentioned?

From letters that survive, it was clear that Benjamin was not at all happy living in Abercanaid and went off to live in Pontypridd. When May and Howard arrived back, they stayed in Abercanaid with May's family for a short while. During this time in a letter, Benjamin talked about buying a 500 acre farm in Breconshire.

Various postcards from 1931 indicate that Benjamin, May and Howard lived at the Bulwack Café, Church Road, Redfield, Bristol. In 1932 Benjamin again travelled to Fremantle in Western Australia, why? His letters mention he is contactable via the Union Bank there.

A letter from May sent to Benjamin travelled to Pakistan via Airmail, missed Benjamin in Ceylon and was sent back to 13 Lewis Road, Bedminster, Bristol, where it was finally delivered.

1934 Benjamin and family are living at 4 Jenkins Place, Queens Road, Merthyr Tydfil.

1934 Benjamin died at Merthyr Lodge.

1951 August quarter May married Thomas Phelps Jones

1962 May died.