

# "CHALFORD", BELWELL LANE

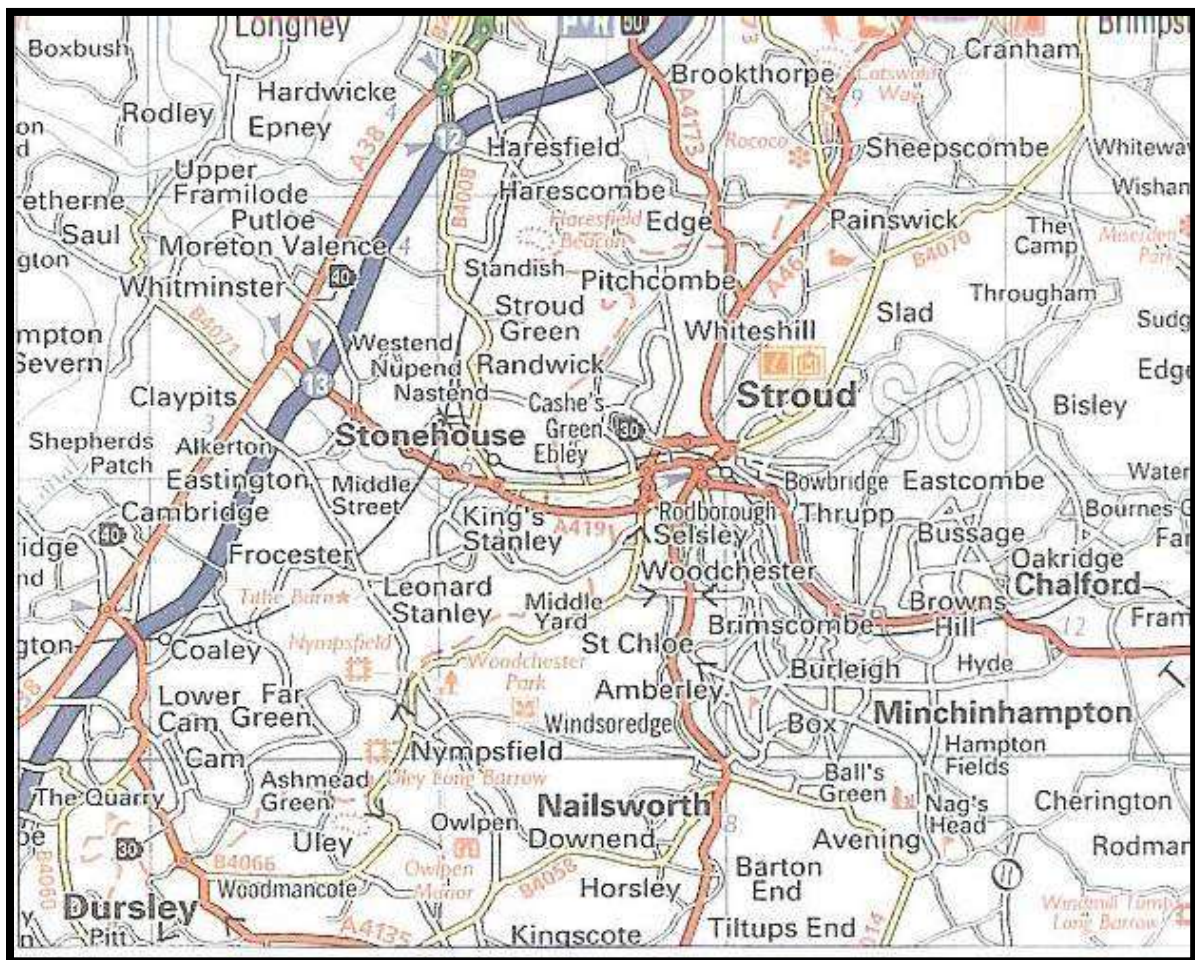
By Keith Jordan

## CHAPTER 1: EDWARD HILL JAMES & FAMILY.

### *Early Days*

Our story begins in the County of Gloucestershire, close to the Cotswold town of Stroud. Stroud is located at the divergence of the five 'Golden Valleys', so named, it is thought, after the monetary wealth created over several centuries in the processing of wool using the plentiful supply of water power available in the area.

The five valleys are named *Chalford*, *Painswick*, *Nailsworth*, *Slad* and *Cam*.



*Map of the area around Stroud.*

Chalford is the largest of the valleys and it is where the River Frome runs along the bottom of a deep, narrow gorge. The Frome powered about 150 mills during the heyday of the wool trade, turning Stroud into the centre of the local cloth industry. Today only two mills continue to make cloth, these being the high quality felt for the covering of tennis balls and the green baise used for snooker and billiard tables.

The original villages of the Chalford Valley comprised *Chalförd*, *Chclford Hill*, *France Lynch*, *Bussage* and *Brownshill*. These were originally squatter settlements, which gradually

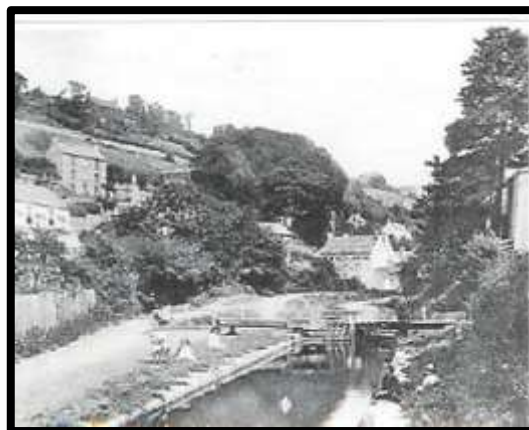
developed to provide housing for weavers and other cloth workers, as expansion of the woollen and silk industries took place in the early Middle Ages.



*Looking down into Chalford – Circa 1900*

The early weaving industry was cottage based, the cottages being scattered haphazardly along the sides of the valleys. They would have each contained a broad loom for weaving cloth. The woven cloth would then have been taken to the mills in the valley bottom, for the final stages of the cloth making process.

In order to facilitate the transportation of the finished cloth, the Thames & Severn Canal was built and this was opened in 1789. It was soon extremely busy and was in frequent daily use. However, due to the building of the railways and increasing use of the motor vehicle, the canals gradually went into decline and the Thames & Severn was eventually abandoned, along with many others.



*Canal at Chalford.*

As the weavers grew in prosperity, many of the simple early dwellings were enlarged, either by the adding of upper floors or the building of extensions to the sides or rear. The process of upgrading may also have been associated with increasing family size and population. This continued through into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and some of the original cottages became fairly large and complex.

By the mid nineteenth Century, the cloth industry was going into terminal decline and great hardship was beginning to be felt amongst the villagers and workers. Some families were even paid to emigrate, in order to reduce the burden on the Parish.



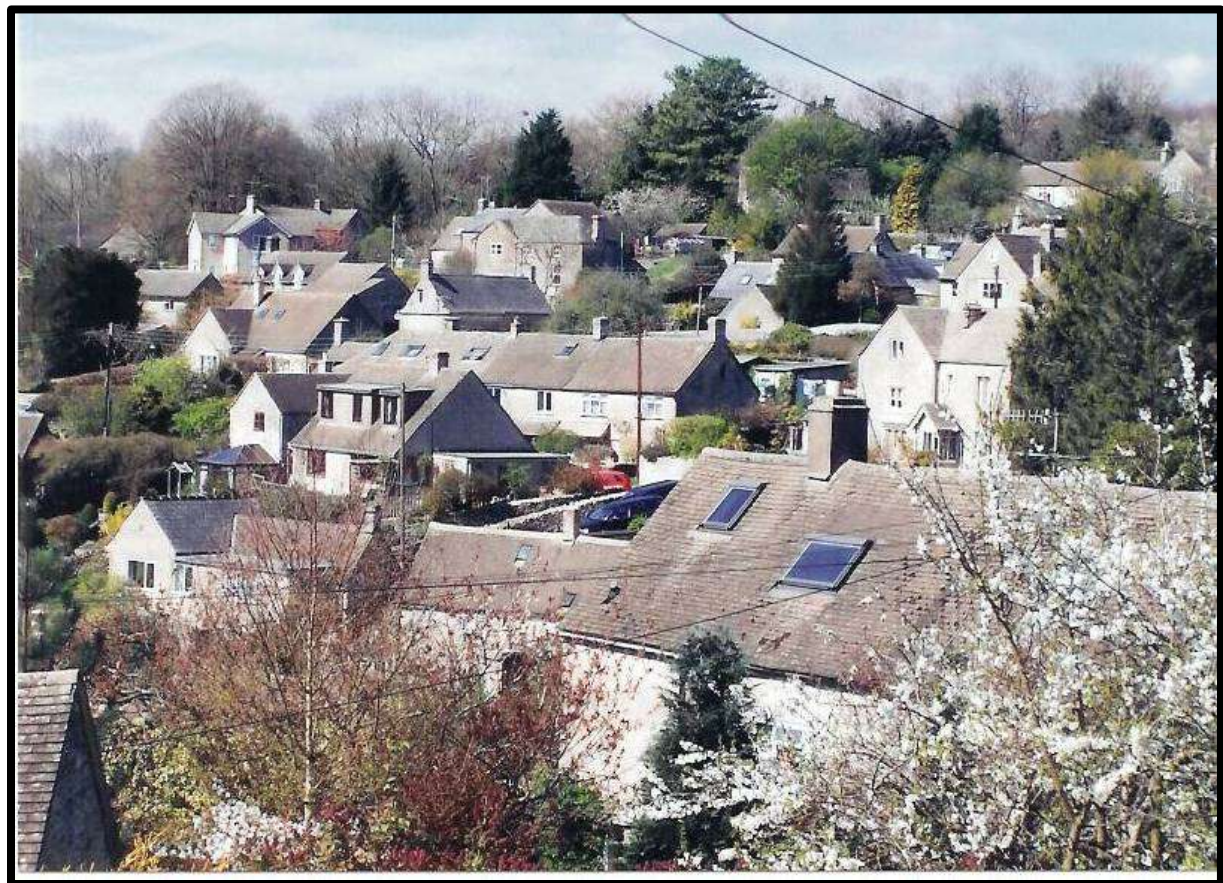
It was against this background that Edward Hill James was born in 1827, in the village of Chalford Hill. It is likely that Edward's unusual middle name was derived from his place of birth.

Edward was the youngest of a family of thirteen. His father, Gideon James, was a tailor by trade which, during this period, would have been a common one for the area. Life must have been extremely hard for such a large family with so many mouths to feed, with jobs in short supply and the region in decline.

Seeing that prospects in Chalford Hill and its surrounds were diminishing rapidly Edward's father decided to move out and, together with the members of his family still living with him at the time, left Gloucestershire and travelled north to Birmingham, in an attempt to seek out a better standard of life.

### ***Chalford Hill Today***

Chalford Hill today is quite different and it is now quite a prosperous area. A new housing estate has been built a little further up the valley slope, which includes a large number of detached homes. In addition, many of the old workers cottages have been modernised or are in the process of being altered and extended.



*Chalford Hill, still showing the scattered arrangement of its housing.*



*The Village Green, Chalford Hill.*



*Modernised Workers Cottages.*



*Cottage in the process of being modernised.*

### ***A New Beginning***

After his arrival in Birmingham, Gideon James's first thoughts would have been directed towards the finding of suitable accommodation in which to live and from which he could ply his trade as a Tailor. It was normal in those days for tradesmen to live above their place of



An examination of the 1841 Census Return shows him living there with his wife Elizabeth, three of his sons and his youngest daughter Hannah aged 16. Edward, at the time, was aged 15 and would have been starting to learn the trade. Work gradually built up and, as more customers were acquired, Gideon's reputation grew. Ten years later, in 1851, the Census Return indicates that, by this time, his wife Elizabeth had died and Edward Hill James had completed his apprenticeship and was now a qualified Master Tailor. His father's business must have grown nicely, because it showed he had two employees, in addition to a General Domestic Servant named Charlotte Poulteny.

It would appear, at that particular time, Phillip Street comprised a miscellany of differing trades. Close to Edward's house and shop were the following occupations:

<i>Michael Sloane</i>	<i>Retail Brewer</i>
<i>Norris Roberts</i>	<i>Cigar Maker</i>
<i>Charles Powles</i>	<i>Gun Barrel Borer</i>
<i>Abel John</i>	<i>Smith</i>
<i>William Smith</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>
<i>John Tilsley</i>	<i>Pearl Button Maker</i>
<i>John Dolman</i>	<i>Awl Blade Maker</i>

1844		1845	
Feb 1	1844	Feb 1	1845
Cash on hand	100.00	Cash on hand	100.00
1st	100.00	1st	100.00
2nd	100.00	2nd	100.00
3rd	100.00	3rd	100.00
4th	100.00	4th	100.00
5th	100.00	5th	100.00
6th	100.00	6th	100.00
7th	100.00	7th	100.00
8th	100.00	8th	100.00
9th	100.00	9th	100.00
10th	100.00	10th	100.00
11th	100.00	11th	100.00
12th	100.00	12th	100.00
Total	1200.00	Total	1200.00

*Page from the Cash Book of 'Edward H James dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 1854.*

A page from his Cash Book dated the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1854, approximately 12 months after the setting up of his business, shows a healthy return. He is already employing a servant (most likely an assistant) at a weekly wage of 6/8d.

In addition to being a businessman, Edward seemed also to have been a personable young man, as it did not take him very long to catch the eye of a Birmingham girl named Lucy Marsh. Shortly afterwards they were 'walking out' together and, on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1856, they were married at the Church of St. Silas, in the Parish of Lozells. As was common in those days, shortly after they were married they decided to start a family and their first child was born in 1858. She was christened Laura Mary James.

Edward continued to work hard as a Tailor during the remainder of the 1850s.

### *An Exciting Opportunity*

At the beginning of the 1860s, however, important changes in the licensing laws were introduced. This, together with a reduction in wine duties, helped newcomers enter the trade. Edward James quickly saw an exciting opportunity and decided to branch out into an additional venture. He became a part-time Wine Merchant. Subsequently, in 1861, he established himself at No. 7 Ann Street, in the centre of Birmingham. His tailoring business, however, continued to form the basis of security for himself and his wife Lucy for several more years.

The range of eighteenth century brick built buildings fronting Ann Street culminated in Bryan's Pastry Shop at the corner of Congreve Street. The photograph also shows in the distance, at the corner of Eden Place, Lloyd's Bank nearing completion.



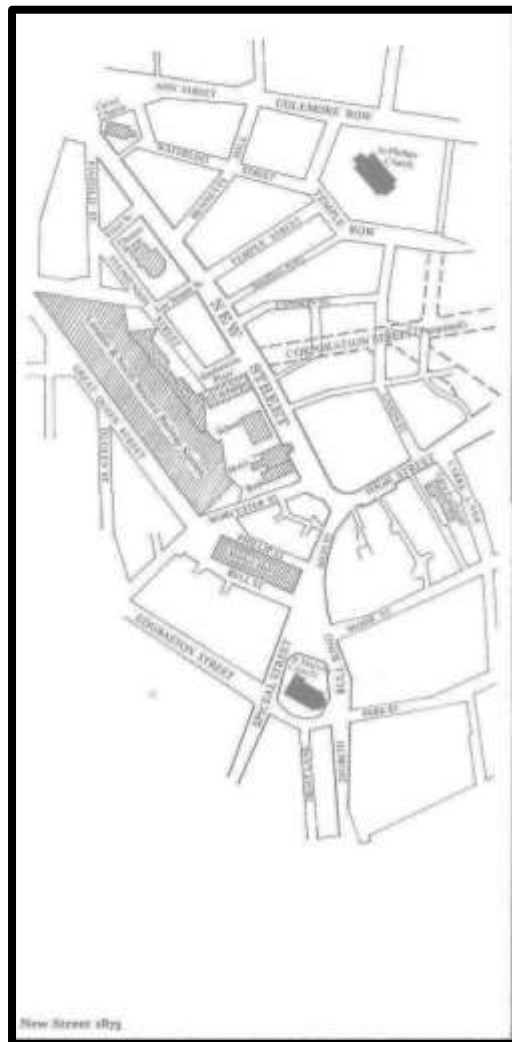
*Ann Street front the junction with Congreve Street in 1870.*

The view today has totally changed. Ann Street has gone completely, to be replaced by Colmore Row. Birmingham Council House now occupies the space taken up by the old

buildings seen in the foreground. (The Council House was built during the period 1874-1879, in the Italian Renaissance style.)

Robert Peel's statue by Peter Hollins. situated in the centre of the street, can now be found in Edgbaston. In its place, a new statue of Queen Victoria was erected in 1901 and the locality renamed Victoria Square. It now forms an impressive frontage to the Council House.

No. 7 Ann Street was actually situated further along, near to the junction with Newhall Street. It is more than possible Edward James would have walked down the uneven cobbled street on his way to Bryan's Pastry Shop to make purchases. Ann Street and Colmore Row, on the southern boundary of the Newhall Estate, were developed for housing around the middle of the eighteenth century by the widowed Ann Colmore and her son, Charles.



*Map of Birmingham City Centre 1875.  
Ann Street and Colmore Row can be seen at the top.*

Over the next few years the wine and spirit venture expanded rapidly. There were two main reasons for this, namely:

- 1) Trading conditions during this period were entirely different from those of today. No large brewery companies existed. Public houses were owner occupied and

therefore they were free to purchase their stock where they pleased. Consequently, a wide field was open to wine and spirit merchants.

By means of hard work and judicious salesmanship, Edward gradually built up a large number of retailers and public houses in Birmingham and the Black Country, who were supplied by *Edward Hill James*, as the company was then called.

2) His method of trading was unusual at this time. The firm was one of the few wine & spirit merchants to buy and sell for cash only terms. This system of cash trading met with great success. He circularised every inn-keeper and wine merchant each quarter, bringing his firm to the notice of many customers, who discovered the benefits of lower prices for cash payments. This method seems very strange to us today as, over the past few decades, we have become used to the availability of endless easy credit. Very much a case now of 'buy now — pay later'!

Due to rapid growth, Edward James began to find his existing premises at Ann Street already becoming too small. This, together with the fact his lease was due to expire in the near future, prompted him to consider moving to larger accommodation, some seven years after his initial move into the business.

In order to reduce the cost of moving all his stock to the new premises, he cannily decided to hold a sale and produced the following poster to advertise the event.

**FOREIGN WINE & SPIRIT DEPOT**  
**7, ANN STREET**  
**BIRMINGHAM.**

**EDWARD HILL JAMES**  
Respectfully informs his Friends and the Public generally  
that in consequence of greatly increased business he is  
**REMOVING**  
To more convenient Premises,  
**28, DALE END,**  
NEXT TO ST. PETER'S CHURCH,

Which place will shortly be OPENED for the sale of  
Wines & Spirits,

He is now offering at No. 7, Ann Street, a lot of  
Wines and Spirits, to save Removal, at the following  
Low Prices:—

**Martell's and Hennessy's Fine Old Cognac,**  
Bottled abroad, with their Brand on Cork  
and Cases, at 48s. per Case.

Fine Pale French Brandy	36s. per Doz.
Ditto Brown French Brandy	"
Fine Old Irish Whisky	26s. "
Ditto Scotch Whisky	26s. "
Fine Old London Gin	24s. "
Ditto Jamaica Rum	26s. "
Good Dinner Sherry	12s. "
Good Port Wine	14s. "
Fine Claret (St. Julien, Medoc)	12s. per Case
Champagne	15s. "
Ditto Pints	10s. 6d. "

AND OTHER WINES AT EQUALLY LOW PRICES.

John Gately, Steam Printing Works, Weaman Street.

Poster produced by Edward Hill James in 1868.



It was not only his business which was growing at this particular point in time. Although still living at Phillip Street, where he and his wife would continue to reside until the early 1870s, further additions to the family had taken place. Edward and Lucy now had six children. Laura Mary James, as mentioned earlier, was joined by the following:

<i>Benjamin James</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>1860</i>
<i>Edward Hill James (Jnr)</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1862</i>
<i>Alice Lucy James</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1863</i>
<i>Agnes Gertrude James</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1865</i>
<i>Kitty Elizabeth James</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1867</i>

### ***A Change M Premises***

Edward James finally decided upon 29 Dale End, Birmingham (please note **not** 28 Dale End, as indicated on the poster) as being the ideal premises in which to continue the firm's expansion. The area at the time was also the centre of the wine trade. He completed the move to the business premises in 1868.



*29 Dale End, Birmingham 1868.*

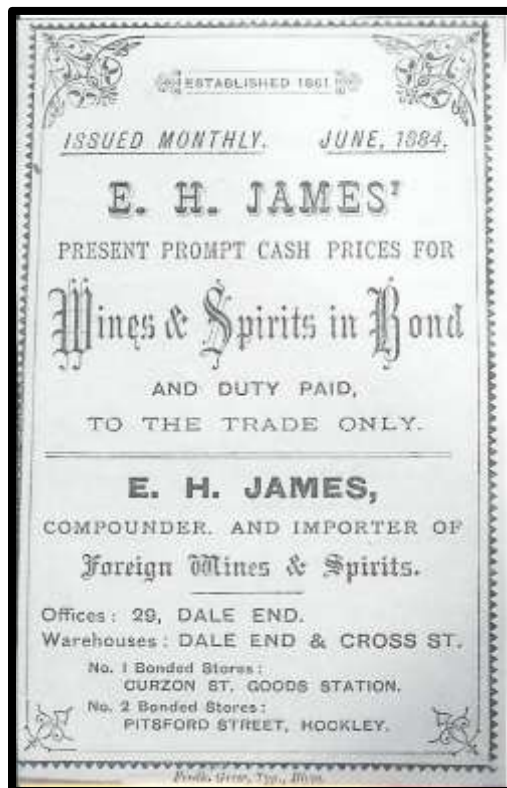
No. 29 had originally been built as a dwelling house in the middle of the eighteenth century, when it had a garden at the rear, with fruit trees and lawns running down to Moor Street. For many years it had been the residence of a Mr Grice, who had a gun making business in nearby Bull Street. In about 1850 it was converted for commercial purposes and a factory was built in the garden at the back.

### ***Cash Payment Scheme***

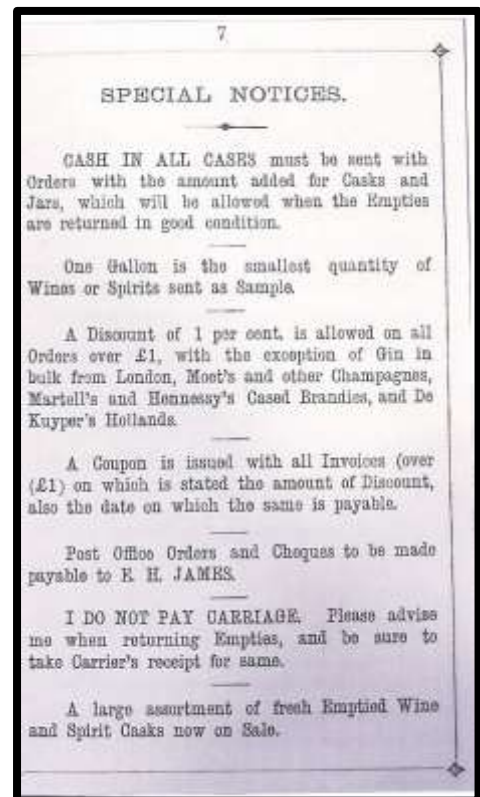
As mentioned previously, E H James introduced a revolutionary cash only system of trading. In his monthly newsletter dated June 1884 he made particular reference to this scheme. He stated:

*"In submitting my revised Price List for the present month, I beg to cordially thank all my friends who have hitherto supported my cash system; indeed, it is very gratifying for me to now inform you that the new undertaking has developed considerably. Since I reduced the prices of Brandy, Whiskey, and Rum at proof strength to 13s. per gallon, I have noticed a much greater demand for these particular goods, thus showing that the qualities must be better and the prices lower than other firms are supplying; in fact, I have no hesitation in stating that there is no firm in existence who can undersell me at these prices. It is doubtless well known to many that since I introduced myself to the trade as a seller for Cash, several other firms in Birmingham and elsewhere have also issued a Cash Price List. At present this has not affected me in any way – indeed, on the other hand, my trade is increasing, but I wish to call the attention of cash buyers to the fact that my prices are lower than any of them, some considerably lower, while I have always used the most strenuous endeavours to dispatch all goods at the proper strength and quality as denoted on my List."*

On the last page of his Price List he included a Special Notice laying down in detail his terms.



*Price List dated June 1884.*



*Details of Cash Terms.*

### ***Bonded Warehouses***

At this point in time, because such progress had been made, the firm of E H James found it necessary to open Bonded Stores at Curzon Street Goods Station and also at Pitsford Street, Hockley.

The dictionary definition of a Bonded Warehouse is as follows: *'A warehouse authorised by H M Customs & Excise for the storage of alcoholic beverages on which payment of duties is deferred until the goods are removed.'*

Still this was insufficient, as the firm found the need to be able to 'blend and bottle ' in bond, but there were no facilities in Birmingham for such operations. The purpose of this type of warehousing is to benefit the trade by enabling the payment of excise duty to be postponed until the goods are removed for sale on the home market.

Many alcoholic beverages are deposited in warehouses by the manufacturers themselves or by wholesalers to whom manufacturers have sold in bulk. Once in a bonded warehouse the goods may be traded between dealers without leaving the warehouse. As long as the goods remain in bond, they may be traded without incurring payment of duty.

After protracted negotiations with the Inland Revenue, E H James was instrumental in the establishment of a bonded store at the new Midland Railway Goods Station being built at Worcester Wharf in Suffolk Street. It was subsequently opened in 1891

### ***A Leafy Suburb***

Despite the worries associated with running a successful business and the inevitable long hours, the welfare of Edward's family was still uppermost in his thoughts. In the early 1870s it was decided that they should move from Phillip Street, where they had lived for nearly 20 years, to the private living quarters above the business premises at 29 Dale End.

Unfortunately, however, this arrangement was relatively short lived, due to the advent of a serious fire in those same quarters and the family were forced to move out and seek alternative accommodation. This time a decision was made to move out of Birmingham completely and into the leafy suburb of Sutton Coldfield.

A major factor in this thinking was almost certainly the fact that in 1862 the railway reached this sleepy, rural town. A branch line had been built from Birmingham New Street and the journey time was less than 30 minutes. The resident population was in the region of 4,500 prior to the event, but this was now beginning to rise quite rapidly with more and more people moving into the area, many being businessmen and workers, who began to use the railway to commute.

A substantial hotel, known as the 'Royal' opened in 1865. This was built just above the railway terminus. Sutton Coldfield was now being looked upon as a destination for day trips and even short holidays, with visitors from Birmingham and the Black Country 'taking the air' and exploring the large expanses of Sutton Park.

An article, written for the *Birmingham Journal* on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1862, just prior to the opening of the branch line, neatly encapsulated the thinking at the time. In it the journalist wrote: -

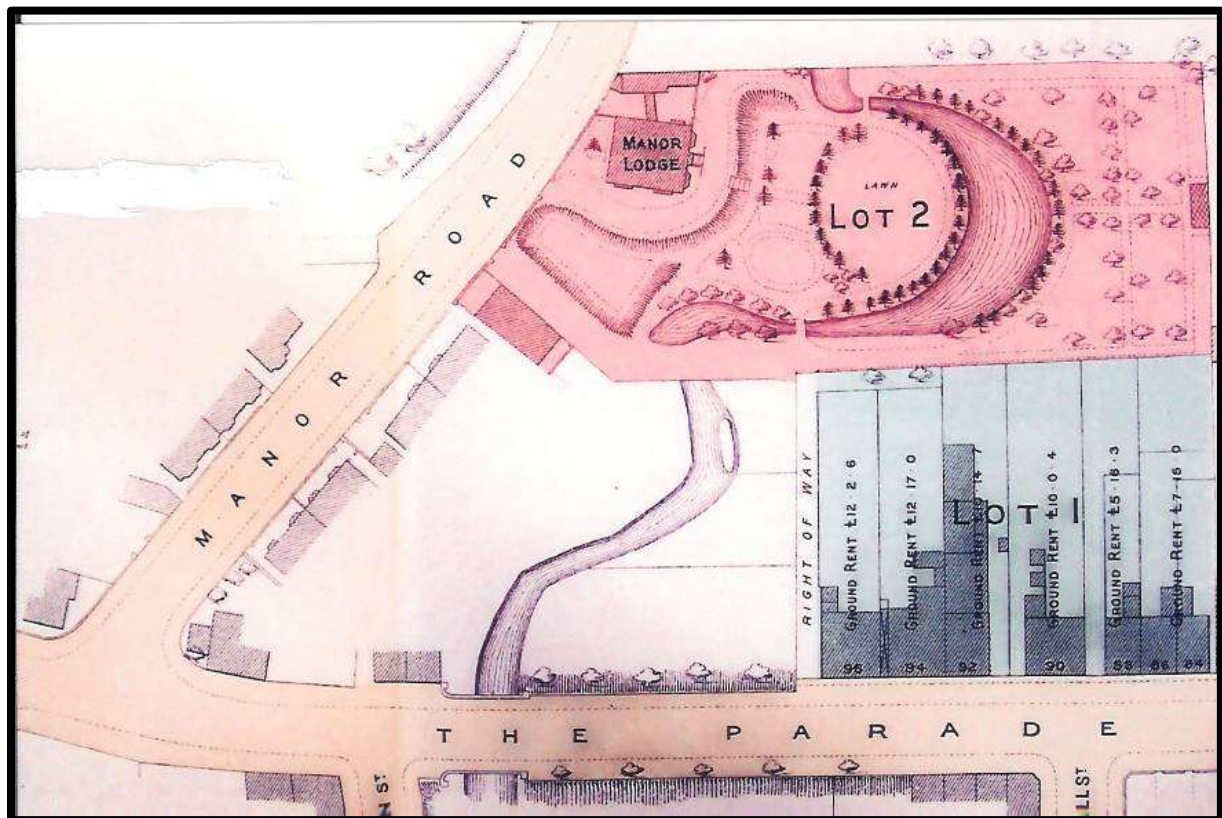
*"The completion of the railway between Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield deserves a passing word of comment and congratulation. When this event has taken place the rush of pleasure seekers will begin, and thousands of our townsmen will be glad to find in Sutton Park the fresh air and recreation they cannot easily obtain nearer home. We may perhaps venture to give a friendly hint to our townsmen and our Sutton*



*neighbours We would have the former remember that as they obtain access to Sutton Park only out of neighbourly courtesy, it is more incumbent upon them to see that no damage is done, and that the privilege is not in any way abused. On the other hand, the corporation of Sutton will no doubt act in a liberal spirit in framing such regulations as may be thought necessary – bearing in mind that the fewer and simpler the rules laid down, the more likely are they to meet with willing obedience. Rightly used, the opening of this railway ought to prove of great benefit to both towns, for many Birmingham men would be glad to take up their residence in Sutton, and the latter place will have a cheap and easy means of communication with Birmingham, which has hitherto been practically as far off from them as Rugby is from ourselves”.*

The property Edward James purchased was a relatively new house, having been built in 1868 under the supervision of the Architect Mr. William Jenkins. It was a leasehold, detached, gentleman's residence, standing in its own grounds of approximately one acre.

The property was positioned just behind the Parade in Manor Road and was known as 'Manor Lodge'. It was described, at the time, as a Gothic Villa Residence.



*Plan of 'Manor Lodge ', Manor Road, Sutton Coldfield.*

The accommodation comprised: Hall, Vestibule, 3 Reception Rooms, China and Kitchen Pantries, Kitchen, Scullery connected by a Verandah with room over, 6 Bedrooms, Dressing Room, Bathroom and WC. It also included Cellarage, Glasshouses, Stabling for two horses, Carriage House, Harness Room, Potting House and enclosed yard.

The house was set back from the road, with a wall and holly hedge in front. It had a roughcast gabled elevation and commanded extensive views. The garden at the rear was well laid out with lawns, flower beds, and an ornamental pool, formed by utilising the Ebrook,

which ran through the grounds, and a kitchen garden. The property also had a secondary approach via a 'right of way' entrance. led directly from The Parade.

Although excellent facilities existed, it is not known whether Edward James or any of his family kept any horses or even learnt to ride. If they did so. it would have taken only a few minutes easy canter to reach either the Wyndley Pool or Town Gate entrances to Sutton Park. The 1881 Census Return confirms Edward was living there with his complete family, together with Elizabeth Emms, a General Domestic Servant.

### ***Land Purchase***

Early in the 1880s Edward Hill James decided his financial situation was such that he could now contemplate moving into a new house — one which was designed and constructed with his own needs fully in mind.

He and his family had been living in Sutton Coldfield at 'Manor Lodge' for approximately 10 years and Edward had come to like the area, with its surrounding countryside, the beautiful Sutton Park nearby and the easy accessibility to his place of business in the centre of Birmingham.

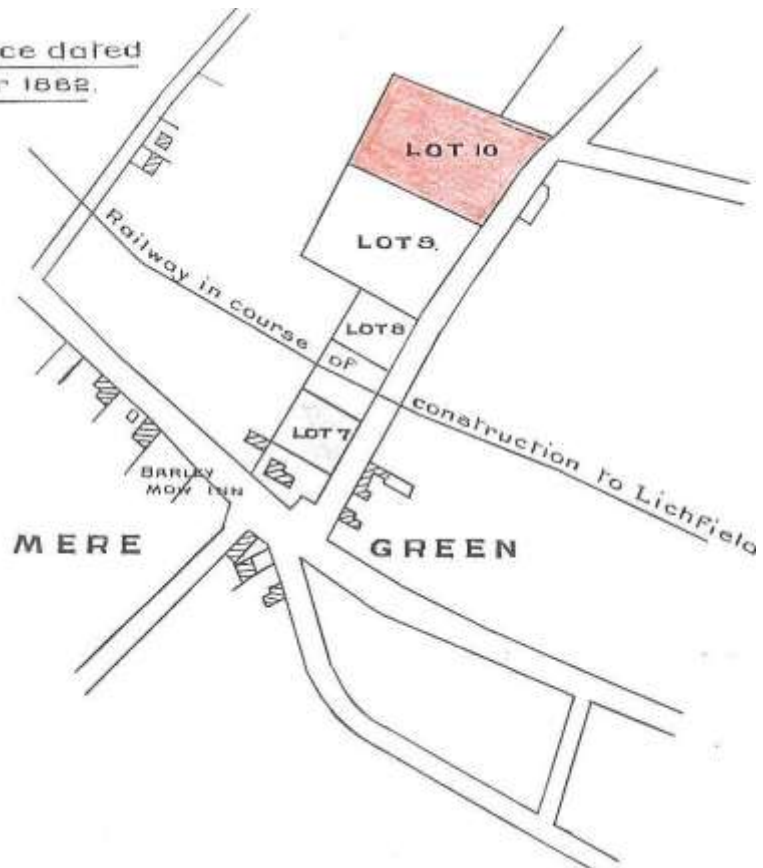
He began searching for land to purchase and finally found what he was looking for in Belwell Road, Four Oaks. No fewer than four plots became available in close proximity to each other, either side of the railway line from Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield, which was then in the course of construction. Edward had always been a shrewd businessman and he considered the price of £1,640 to be a good investment, with land bound to increase in value once the railway was completed (this actually occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1884, when the first passenger service came into operation).

Edward chose Plot 10 as being the most suitable for his own requirements. It stretched to approximately two acres, which ensured more than adequate privacy, especially in view of the fact in those days Belwell Road (later to be re-designated as Belwell Lane) was quiet and rural. It was also close to the Four Oaks Estate and Sutton Park.



*Belwell Lane in the 1930s.*

**PLAN** From Conveyance dated  
30<sup>th</sup> September 1882.



*Plan showing the four parcels of land purchased by Edward James, Plot 10 being the one chosen for the building of his new residence.*

### ***A New House***

His next step was to arrange for the commission of a suitable Architect to oversee the design process. Edward eventually decided to appoint William Henman. It is not known whether this was the result of a recommendation or whether they knew each other, having developed an earlier relationship due to Edward's wine business.

William Henman was born in London in 1846 and was articled to his father, Charles Henman, in 1866, at the relatively late age of 20. He then moved to the office of Thomas Hayter Lewis, whilst attending the Royal Academy Schools. He subsequently moved to the offices of Edward Sharpe and travelled in France before commencing independent practice in 1871 at Stockton-on-Tees, in partnership with John William Alexander.

He moved to Birmingham in 1879 and was admitted as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1881, his proposers being Thomas Hayter Lewis, Francis



Cranmer Penrose and Ewan Christian. He was elected a Fellow on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1895, his proposers being Penrose, Alfred Waterhouse and Alfred Hale.



*William Henman, FRIBA (1846-1917).*

At the time he was appointed by Edward James, William Henman was in the process of building his reputation, having already designed, in neo-Queen Anne style, Handsworth Council House and Library, Soho Road, in 1880. He was later asked to design an extension to the building in 1891. Not long after being involved in the house at Belwell Lane, Henman was appointed Architect for the General Hospital, Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, the building of which commenced in 1894 and was completed in 1897. It was built in terracotta, in the Renaissance style.

This project was the making of him and he became a well known and respected Architect in his own right and also later, from 1898 onwards, in association with his partner William Cooper. The practice specialised in the design of hospitals and they were subsequently associated with, amongst others:

*The Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. This hospital was a landmark construction at the time and laid claim to being the first 'air conditioned building' in the world' (1903).*

*Ramsey Cottage Hospital, Isle of Man (1907).*

William Henson also designed Nos. 85 & 87, Cornwall Street, Birmingham, in the Arts and Crafts style and the Children's Hospital (1894-97). Their offices were situated at 19, Temple Street, Birmingham.

The builder chosen to construct the property in Belwell Lane, was John Barnsley & Sons and they were probably recommended by William Henson. John Barnsley & Sons was a prominent Birmingham firm, which was founded by John Barnsley in the first half of the nineteenth century and was responsible for the construction of a number of major buildings, including:

*Birmingham Council House (1874-79).*  
*Highbury Hall, as the family home of Birmingham's famous parliamentarian the*  
*Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain (1878-79).*  
*Birmingham School of Art, Margaret Street (1881-85).*  
*Birmingham Children's Hospital (1894-97).*  
*Substantial alteration & extension work to the Grand Hotel, which included the*  
*construction of a ballroom (1895).*  
and  
*The Hall of Memory (1923).*

The firm was well connected with the respected architectural firm of Martin & Chamberlain. Thomas Barnsley was taken into partnership by his father in the early 1860s and this happened to be about the same time as John Chamberlain began to practice as an Architect. Thomas Barnsley superintended the building of all the work Chamberlain designed in the early part of his career.

It might be said that both architect and builder combined to introduce the application of the principles of Gothic Architecture in Birmingham during this period. Thomas Barnsley died in 1909.

It can be seen from the aforementioned that Edward James had aligned himself with two real heavyweights in the architectural and building world and he obviously had no intention of 'cutting any corners' when it came to the construction of his new family home. It was thought at the time that he instructed them to proceed 'regardless of cost' A situation almost unheard of in modern times.

After initial contact between the parties, a series of meetings would have been necessary, to ascertain the terms of reference and the exact needs of the Client. William Henson would have submitted various designs for approval, based upon the result of the discussions, and final agreement would eventually have been reached.

It would then have been the turn of the Builder to draw up a Bill of Quantities, in order to provide Edward James with an accurate figure for the construction costs involved. This would, of course, have been subject to a Final Account being prepared, upon completion of the work. At this point in time, any alterations to the original specification would have been noted, together with any unforeseen costs.

An official Contract would have been drawn up and signed and building work would have then commenced on an agreed date, thought to be during the period 1883/84.

The floor plans of the house show the property to be very substantial. On the Ground Floor, as part of the family living area, was a Porch, Vestibule, Hall, Conservatory, Drawing Room, Breakfast Room, Dining Room, Cloakroom and W.C. Also provided were a Stable Yard, Coach House, Harness Room and a Stable with stalls for two horses.

A Passage leading off the Hall led to the servants' quarters, which included Kitchen, China and Pantry Room, Scullery, a second Pantry with Larder off, Knives and Boots Room, W.C. and Laundry Room. Separate doors led out to the Kitchen Yard and Coals Storage.





A Half Basement was reached via stairs leading down from the servants' hall. This comprised Cellarage, a Carpenter's Shop, Cart Shed and Tool House.

On the First Floor was an Upper Hall or Landing, 6 Bedrooms, Dressing Room, Bathroom, W.C. and Housemaids' Closet.

On the Second Floor were 5 additional Bedrooms, a Box Room and a Tank Room.

Victorian houses in this category would often have contained a combination of the following features:

### **Externally**

(a) Bay windows were very fashionable. These usually had a flat frontage, with slanting sides and their own slate roof.

(b) Plate glass came into production in 1832 and four and six pane vertical sliding sash windows soon became popular.

(c) As the only way of heating the rooms was by means of wood or coal fires, fireplaces needed to be provided. These were often ostentatious, elaborate pieces made of cast iron.

(d) Fireplaces meant chimneys were necessary and these sometimes resulted in fine examples, with beautiful brickwork designs.

(e) Roofs were normally of Welsh slate, very expensive should they need to be replaced today.

### **Internally**

(a) Victorians saw bathrooms as strictly functional places, but the classic roll-top bath with claw feet, is still extremely popular and sought after today.

(b) Kitchens were also designed to be functional and the main centerpiece here would have been a generous sized wooden table for the purpose of food preparation. A large range was usually provided for cooking. Fully-fitted kitchens were simply not on the agenda and a separate scullery, with a large sink for cleaning the pots, pans, plates etc., together with a walk-in larder were more the norm.

(c) Carpets were made in rich, dark colours, heavily patterned with large three dimensional designs celebrating elements of nature — birds, flowers or geometric patterns. A perimeter of highly polished wood about two feet wide would be left around the edges of the room. Tiles were used in areas of heavy traffic, such as porches, vestibules, cloakrooms and conservatories.

(d) Front doors were usually of hardwood with stained or etched glass panels. Stained glass was also popular in internal doors.

(e) Victorians had a limited palette and so paintwork was usually restricted to strong colours such as ruby reds, deep forest greens, blues and purples.

(f) The Victorian approach to paintings etc. was to put them all up and let each picture fight for itself. Strong notions of national identity and empire were reflected in regal portraits and romantic countryside scenes.

(g) Wallpaper came into general manufacture in the 1840s. Quality varied considerably from mass produced designs on wood-pulp paper to elaborate hand printed motifs on rag paper.

### ***Layout of the Grounds***

A long driveway led up from Belwell Lane to the front entrance. This driveway was flanked by lime and horse chestnut trees, planted alternately. A large number of elm trees were also included in the original landscaping scheme, together with under planting of holly and rhododendron. An unusual aspect of the external design to the front of the property was the siting there of the kitchen garden, greenhouses & potting shed.

At the rear of the house, a lawn sloped gently downwards. At the end of this was a low hedge with an opening leading to a second lawn. This was reached via two shallow steps, flanked by twin brick pillars supporting pedestals topped with fluted urns for flower displays. The lawn nearest to the house was planted with small ornamental trees and shrubs.

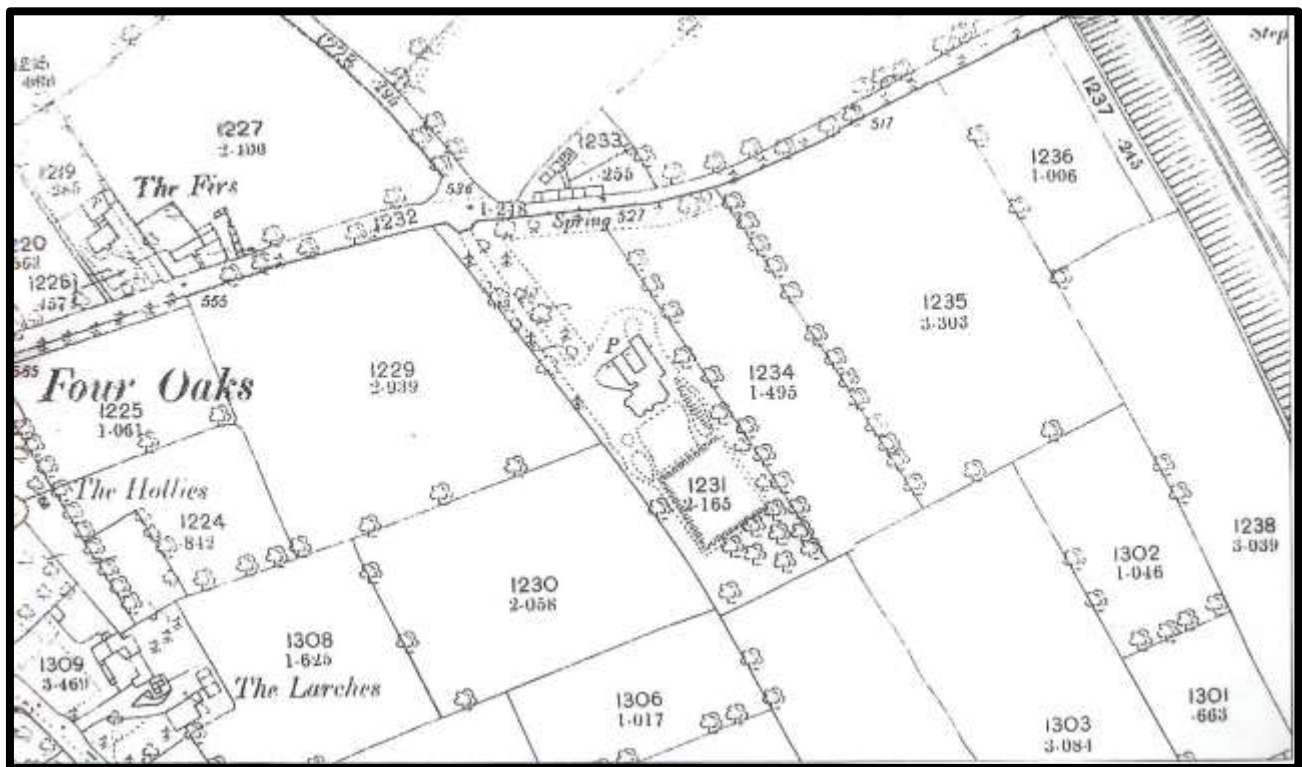
Pleasant areas to sit and admire the views were provided by the inclusion of numerous benches. A pathway wound around the perimeter of the garden and beyond that were wide borders with plants, shrubs and additional trees.



*South view of 'Chalford' (rear elevation).*

Upon the completion of his new house Edward James named it 'Chalford' after his place of birth.

### *An Envidable Location*



*Ordnance Survey Map — First Edition 1888.*

The position of 'Chalford' can clearly be seen as plot 1231 on the 1888 Ordnance Survey Map, issued not long after the property was completed.

From this map, it is easy to gauge why Edward James chose the plot in question, as it enjoyed a very desirable situation. It was not overlooked at the front or rear of the property and, in actual fact, with the exception of 'The Firs' a little further up Belwell Lane on the opposite side of the road, there were no other dwellings, other than the ones fronting onto Four Oaks Road.



Edward enjoyed the 'best of both worlds' as, despite its rural location, 'Chalford' was quite close to the centre of Sutton Coldfield and shops were opening just a short distance away at Mere Green.

### ***Grand Opening?***

Upon the completion of 'Chalford', Edward James may well have decided to mark the occasion by having a grand opening. In this way he would have been able to invite his friends, relatives, business colleagues and clients. For a businessman like Edward, it would have been just too good an opportunity to miss and, although it cannot be substantiated, he may have coupled this with a garden party in the grounds.

'Etiquette' was the one word which aptly described life in the reign of Queen Victoria. It would therefore have been 'etiquette' for Edward to have done this. Imagine the scene therefore on the day of the garden party, with the ladies in their long sweeping dresses and holding their parasols to protect their pale complexions from the sun. The men in their top hats, long frock coats and leaning upon their silver topped canes.

Being in the wine and spirit trade, one could be sure there would have been no shortage of alcoholic beverages! In the evening, after a pleasant meal, perhaps the ladies would have retired to the Drawing Room to gossip over this and that. The gentlemen, after the table had been cleared, may have remained in the Dining Room to discuss the problems of the day over a good glass of claret or port, followed perhaps by a game of cards.



*Wedding reception in the grounds of the Grange Erdington, July 1899.*

### ***Victorian Times***

For those in the Upper and Middle classes of society, rules such as proper behaviour, the proper forms of address and even what to wear were considered very important. From the slightest social error to how a gentleman spoke to a young lady, Victorians were greatly concerned with every aspect of daily life. From the moment they left their beds, their days were governed by 'do's and don'ts'.

The horror of social ostracism was paramount. To be caught in the wrong fashion at the wrong part of the day was as greatly feared as addressing a member of society by the wrong title. It was important to know whom you could speak with, especially if you hadn't been properly introduced. For a woman, being asked to dance by a complete stranger could pose a problem of etiquette, which might have caused repercussions and gossip for days.

Young ladies were constantly chaperoned. To be found alone with a gentleman who was other than family was tantamount to social death. Her reputation would be ruined and her gentleman companion would have found himself the object of gossip and perhaps derision.

The established career for women in this category was marriage — full stop. They were expected to represent their husbands with grace and provide absolutely no scandal. Charity work would have been accepted, including sewing for the poor and putting together food baskets. Gentlemen had to keep track of when it was proper to either smoke or have a glass of sherry in front of ladies. When to bow and to whom one should tip one's hat, could cause gossip if the wrong decision was made.

'*Clothes maketh the man*' is a phrase which could be applied to the Victorian period. Victorian clothes were very much a symbol of who you were, what you did for a living and how much money was in your bank account.

Etiquette also played a major part in Victorian clothing. It was considered 'good etiquette' to dress appropriately to one's age and position in society. To own a parasol or an umbrella was a social-scale barometer. The wealthy had their own, whilst the general public would rent one if the weather turned wet.

For men it was considered their dress was not complete without a walking stick or cane. Some canes contained compartments which were useful for holding vials of cologne. Although the material for Victorian clothes was manufactured, ready-made outfits were unknown. Seamstresses and tailors were responsible for custom-made creations. Milliners, Glovers and Hatters would help complete the look.

Throughout the era, Victorian fashion changed dramatically. Skirts went from straight to being spread over large hoops. At the end of the period, the hoop had disappeared from view and it was back to slimmer skirts, although now sporting a bustle at the rear.

Head gear had a style all of its own, with large lavishly decorated hats, covered with feathers, lace and flowers. With regard to the corset, however, this design element never varied. To wear Victorian dress, it was necessary to have a cinched-in waist. For younger ladies, having a waist the same as your age was the aim. Seventeen years old? That meant you should strive for a seventeen-inch waist! Older ladies were allowed more leeway.

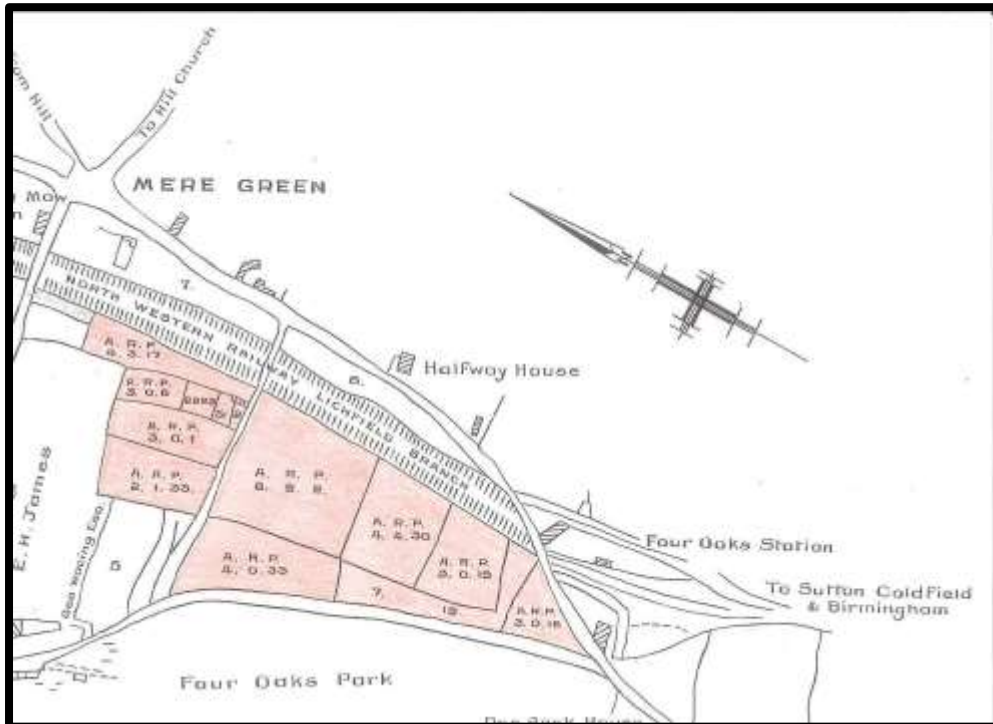
For men, Victorian style didn't go in for such radical changes. Coat lengths, however, did vary over time and the cinching of the waist gave way to a more loosely fitting jacket. The elegant dress-coat for the day slowly gave way to a long frock coat, usually black.

### ***Further Land Purchases***

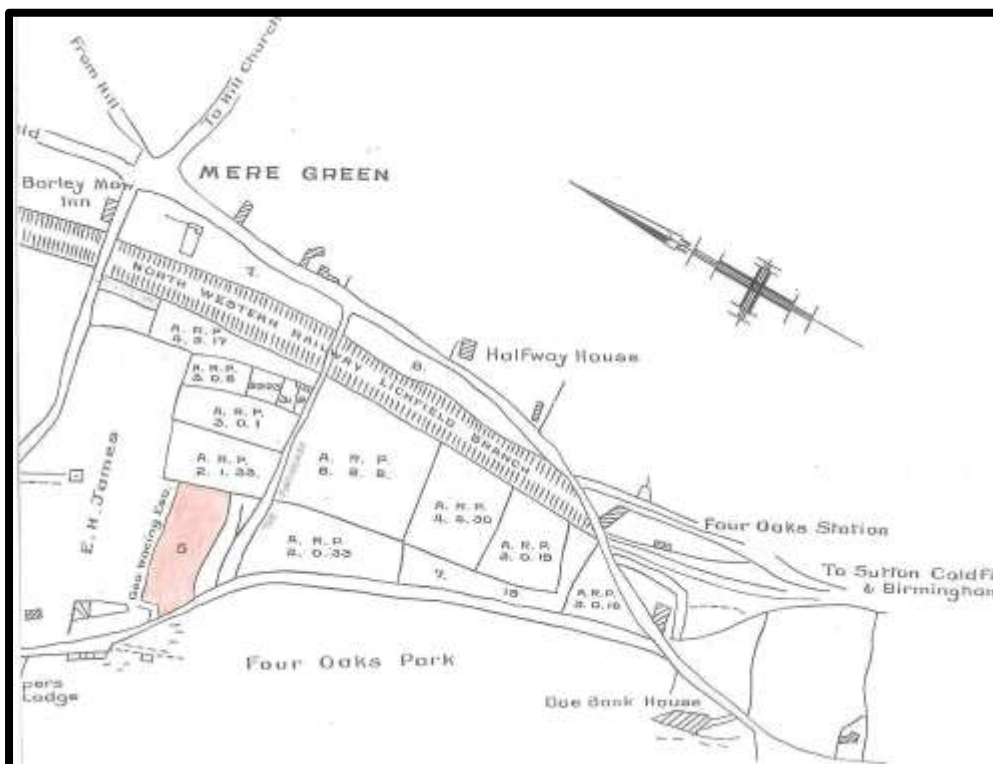
On the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1888, Edward James bought another large parcel of land owned jointly by Sir Charles Edward Cradock Hartopp of Aston Flamville, Leicestershire, the Rt. Hon.

Walter Charles Montague Douglas Scott of 3 Grosvenor Crescent, Middlesex and Thomas Charles Douglas Whitmore Esq. of Gurmley Hall, Market Harborough, Leicestershire.

The overall sum involved amounted to £3,500 and the land covered a substantial, triangular shape situated between the newly built railway line to Lichfield and Four Oaks Road.



*Plan showing land purchased by Edward Hill James on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1888.*



*Plan showing land purchased by Edward Hill James in 1889.*

Later the next year, in 1889, he purchased a further plot of land, together with the right to pass over 'The Fordrough' and the road beside it, for a figure of £1,815. 'The Fordrough' is still in existence and forms a right of way between Four Oaks Road and Lichfield Road, where it exits almost opposite Cremorne Road.

In Edward's Will, dated the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1903, he authorized the Trustees to 'develop and lay out for building and to make new roads upon any of his freehold land left in trust for the family'. Eventually, during the mid 1950s onwards, the Trustees at the time sold the main parcels of land to developers and this resulted in the formation of:

*Irnham Road*  
*Midgley Drive*  
*Hawkesford Close*  
*Pine Leigh*  
*and Beechcroft Court apartments.*

### **1891 Census**

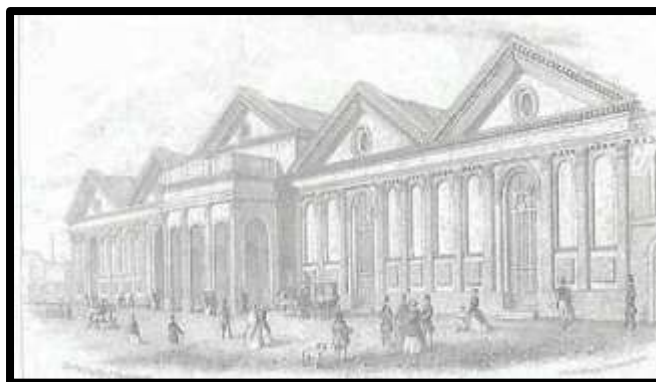
A few years after moving into 'Chalford' the Census for 1891 was completed. From this record it can be ascertained that, besides Edward and his wife Lucy, five of their children were still residing with them. Only his elder son Benjamin James had moved out. He was now living close by in Four Oaks Road, Sutton Coldfield. In addition to the family, three domestic servants were noted as living at the premises, namely:

*Harriet Hamer of Belbroughton in Worcestershire,*  
*Jane Wakefield of Teddington in Warwickshire.*  
*Mary Ann Steadman of Dudley in Worcestershire.*

Two of the James's daughters (Alice and Kitty) were, as yet, unmarried but Agnes had married someone with the memorable name of Frank Tyrrell Bakewell Edkins. His occupation was a Clerk and he was from Droitwich in Worcestershire. They were both residing at 'Chalford', together with their young son Charles, aged one year.

Finally, on the day the Census was taken, Frederick Wearing was indicated as being there as a Visitor to the house. He was aged 24 from West Bromwich and he too was described as a Clerk. He was almost certainly visiting Alice James as, two years later, they married in 1893.

### **Bingley Hall Exhibition**



*Bingley Hall, Broad Street, Birmingham.*



In 1893 the firm of E H James agreed to have a stand at the Brewers' and Distillers' First Annual Exhibition being held at the Bingley Hall, Broad Street, Birmingham, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

**E. H. JAMES'S SPECIAL EXHIBITION CIRCULAR.**  
**THE BREWERS' AND DISTILLERS' FIRST ANNUAL EXHIBITION**  
— TO BE HELD IN —  
**BINGLEY HALL, BIRMINGHAM, from APRIL 13th to 22nd.**  
**LIST OF SPECIAL OFFERS.**  
READ IT CAREFULLY THROUGH AND COMPARE PRICES  
Telegraphic Address — "DISTILLER, BIRMINGHAM." Telephone No. 971.  
Samples of all the following goods will be on show at the "BREWERS' AND DISTILLERS' EXHIBITION" in E. H. JAMES'S sampling room, nearly opposite the main entrance, and exactly opposite the way out.  
Orders to view the goods in bond, free samples, and all other information, may be had either at 29 Dale End, or at the Exhibition, Bingley Hall, between April 13th and 22nd. E. H. JAMES will be very pleased to show samples to anyone, whether they are buyers or not, the utmost attention will be paid to all who visit the Exhibition.  
These goods are specially selected from E. H. JAMES'S stock for sale at the Exhibition in Bingley Hall, in each case the very lowest possible price is quoted, free from commissions or any other charge whatever. It must be distinctly understood that in many instances I cannot continue to supply the same goods at these prices, as they are nearly all from stocks which I have purchased at a large discount for cash.

*Poster issued by E H James to advertise their stand at the 1893 Exhibition.*

It was a good sized stand, located in a favourable position near the main entrance of the exhibition hall. The stand also contained a Sample Room, where various wines and spirits handled by the firm could be tasted, which would have proved extremely popular to visitors!



*E H James' stand at the Bingley Hall Exhibition 1893.*

## *An Eye for a Bargain*

In addition to being a level-headed businessman. Edward James also had 'an eye for a bargain'. He made very good profits by purchasing ship-wrecked goods in bulk and selling them at discounted rates.

Marine salvage is the process of rescuing a ship, its cargo, or other property from peril. Salvage incorporates rescue towing, refloating a sunken or grounded vessel, or patching or repairing a ship. If the ship cannot be saved, then the valuable parts of the vessel or its cargo may be recovered for its resale value, or for scrap. Two words, which found their way into the dictionary and became household words, originate from ships being in distress, *Flotsam* — Goods which floated off the ship, whilst it was in danger or when it sank; and *Jetsam* — Goods which are thrown off the ship.

Two instances in which Edward James became involved with the salvage business, were the following:

### *SHIP WRECK AT MILFORD HAVEN*

The Pembrokeshire coast and islands are very dangerous for shipping and, at the last count, there are around 500 wrecks in the area. The *Loch-Shiel* was shipwrecked on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1894 on the seaward side of Thorn Island, near Milford Haven on an outbound-bound passage to Adelaide, Australia.

The vessel was a 3 masted fully rigged ship, which was built at Glasgow in 1877. She was 225 feet in length and manufactured of wood and iron. She carried a cargo of rock and kelp, together with 7,000 cases of spirit and general merchandise. It broke up on the sea bed at a depth of between 10-15 metres.

The firm of E H James purchased two consignments from this wreck. The second being described as 'Exceedingly valuable and fine Old Scotch Whiskies'.

Telephone 977. Telegraphic Address: "BATHURST, BIRMINGHAM."

29 DALE END,  
BIRMINGHAM,  
August, 1894.

### ANOTHER LARGE PURCHASE OF SALVAGE WHISKEY

EX STEAMSHIP "LOCH-SHIEL."

E. H. JAMES has just purchased a second consignment of exceedingly valuable and fine Old Scotch Whiskies saved from the wreck of the "Loch-Shiel," which stranded near Milford Haven, on an outward-bound passage to Adelaide, Melbourne, and other Australian ports, in March last.

The following is the stock; the earliest application is essential to secure orders. Quality guaranteed perfect.

— Terms: — NET CASH, —

	Per Case	Per Doz.	Per Gross
258 Cases Andrew Usher's O.V.G. (Old Vatted Glenlivet) Special Reserve, 14 U.P.	18 0	36	
252 Cases Andrew Usher's O.V.G. (Old Vatted Glenlivet), 14 U.P.	17 6	34 8	
83 Cases Andrew Usher's O.V.G. (Old Vatted Glenlivet), 20 U.P.	14 6	32	
325 Cases John Walker's, Kilmarnock, Old Highland Whiskey, 14 U.P.	17 6	35	
87 Cases "The Apex Blend" Fine Old Scotch Whiskey, 21 U.P.	10 6	27	
36 Cases "The Clan Chattan," Fine Old Highland Whiskey, 17 U.P.	11 6	29	
20 Cases Finest Old Blended Glenlivet Whiskey (Slater, Rodger & Co.), 17 U.P.	12 6	30	
12 Cases "The Thistle" Blend of Fine Old Scotch (Slater, Rodger & Co.), 20 U.P.	11 6	28	
15 Cases "The Clans" Blend, Old Scotch (Slater, Rodger & Co.), 17 U.P.	11 6	29	

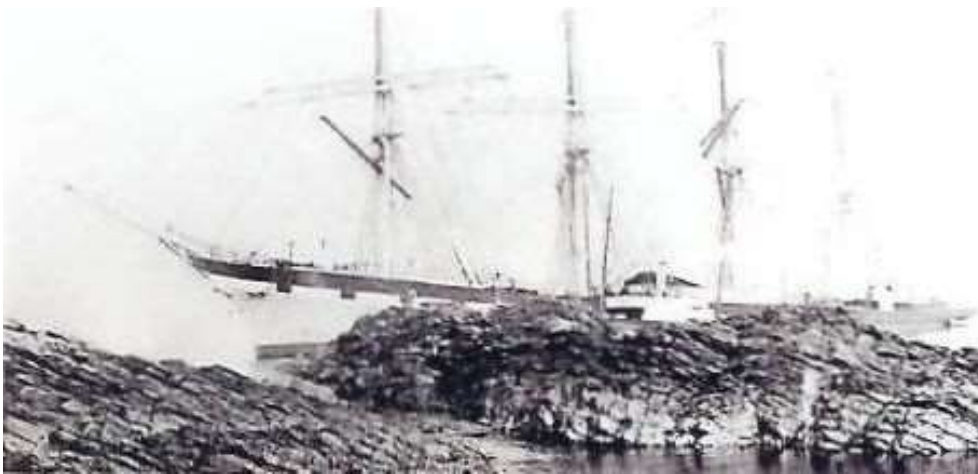
*E H James Poster dated August 1894.*

## *SHIP WRECK AT ALDERNEY*

Wrecked vessels often provided the Channel Islanders with some rich pickings, as a variety of cargoes were washed ashore. In some cases looters helped themselves from stranded ships. The four masted *Liverpoo*' was one of the largest and most beautiful ships to come to grief.

The vessel was wrecked at Alderney in the Channel Islands during an outbound passage from Antwerp to San Francisco on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1902. E H James purchased most of the cargo of wines and spirits. The cargo included 89 octaves and 26 hogsheads of Brandy, 164 casks of Port and Sherry, 26 hogsheads of Claret, 101 casks of Whisky and 2,202 cases of various spirits.

The poster actually shows a picture of the vessel in question aground on the rocks.



*Part of the Poster produced by E H James, Dated 1902.*

## ***Magazine Article***

In the early 1900s, Edward James, on behalf of his firm, approached the *Brewer and Publican* magazine. He suggested, if they wished to write an article based upon his Bonded Stores & Duty Paid Warehouses, he would offer them unrestricted access. Edward James was delighted when the magazine accepted his proposal, as he knew he stood to gain by the free publicity which would automatically accrue.

The *Brewer and Publican* decided to proceed by way of a special supplement. In the somewhat flowery language, which was prevalent in those days, the article began:

*It would be difficult to discover a better result of a continuous application of enterprise and energy to a business than that which characterises the wine and spirit trade of our old townsman, Mr Edward Hill James. More than 40 years ago Mr James commenced in the trade, and many of our oldest citizens will renumber his premises in Ann Street, which have long since been swept away to make room for some of the large buildings in Colmore Row. It was thus he was forced into the recognized trade quarter of the city, viz., 29 Dale End, where for many years he has carried on the trade of a wholesale dealer in wines and spirits.*

The journalist went on to say:

*In accepting Mr. James's cordial invitation to inspect his warehouses and bonded stores, and to learn 'how the thing worked', we find ourselves in a position to interest our readers with an experience of half a day 'amongst the spirits', for indeed we must confess we were highly interested with what we saw and learned.*

*Upon arriving at 29 Dale End, on a bright, cold September morning, we were shown by an assistant into the sample room, where we await the appearance of our host.*

*This room the assistant informs us, contains a duplicate sample of the whole of the goods which lie in the bonded stores at Worcester Wharf, in Suffolk Street and when we were told that the shelves and cupboards contain something like four thousand samples, we commenced to realise the immense stock in bond; so perfect is the system of arranging these samples that any particular one can be found momentarily by reference to the sample room book.*

*An electric bell announces that Mr. James is waiting in his private office to meet us, and after ascending an old-fashioned oak staircase we make the acquaintance of the head of the business, who, to judge by the heaps of papers and samples on his desk, has been having a lively hour with the letters, which arrived by the early post; these are soon all taken away by the shorthand clerk, who has received definite instructions as to disposal of the more intricate replies.*

*We were at once at home with Mr. James's congenial and business-like manner. We ventured to suggest the query: - How is it Mr. James that we hear so much about your business and see so many of your trade circulars, and yet we never either meet you or any of your travellers or agents? The reply is promptly given.*

*"I keep no travellers or agents, there are quite enough, goodness only knows, without mine. I simply stay at home and mind my own business, and it would be a great boon to the Trade if others did the same."*

*But, we ask, how do you contrive to 'go ahead' in these times of keen competition without representatives to show your goods?*

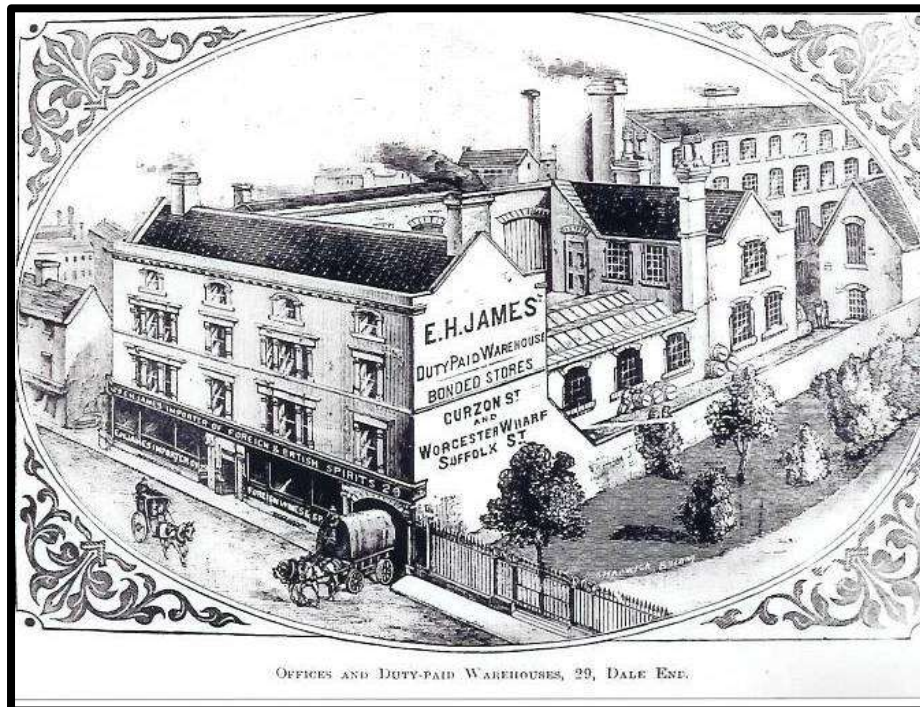
*"It is perfectly simple," he says; "I buy all my goods in the leading markets for cash, and offer them with a small commission by circular every three months to the Trade only, on the same terms. I keep down all working expenses as much as possible and give my friends the benefit of my purchases."*

*We are here prompted to suggest that there are many innkeepers and publicans who are very highly prejudiced against buying goods at low prices, as many foster the idea that it means a corresponding low quality, to which Mr. James replies: -*

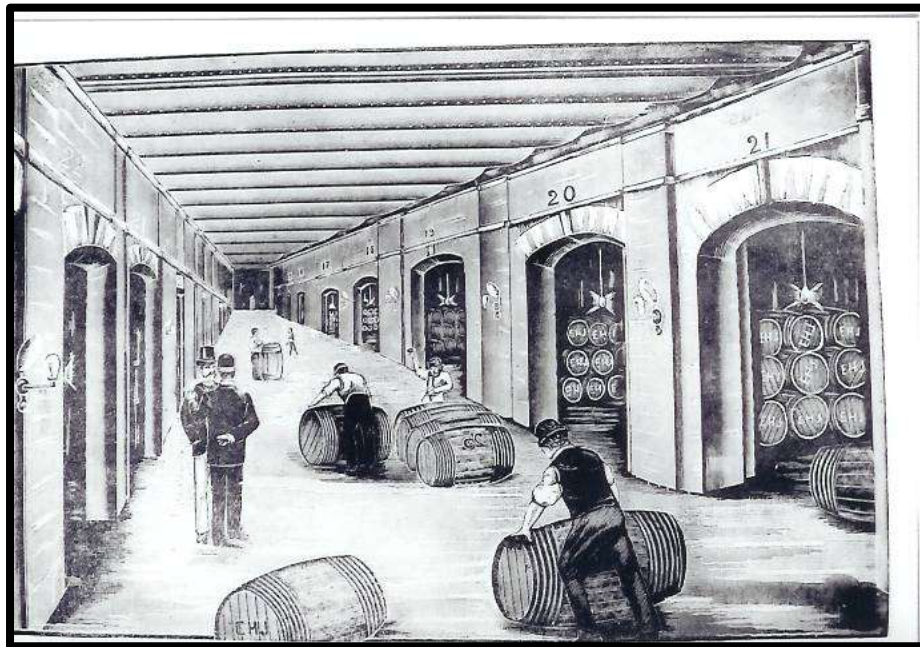
*"I am quite aware of this sort of thing, and of the ignorance which induces it, but my system is gradually finding its level, and I am now pleased to tell you that many, who have been kept from me partly from prejudice, and partly by the malicious reports of travellers, have at last found out that their interests are best served in purchasing their goods free from the heavy commission paid to agents and travellers. I find prejudice among publicans is one of the most difficult matters I have to deal with. You will scarcely believe it to be true, but still it is a fact, that some of the largest buyers - I don't confine myself strictly to publicans - will readily give London, Belfast, or Liverpool firms a far away higher price for their goods than they can obtain the identical brands for from my own stock."*

The writer then moved on to describe to his readers the tour of the bonded warehouses in the company of Edward James. The article also included some fine engraved pictures, some of which can be found below.



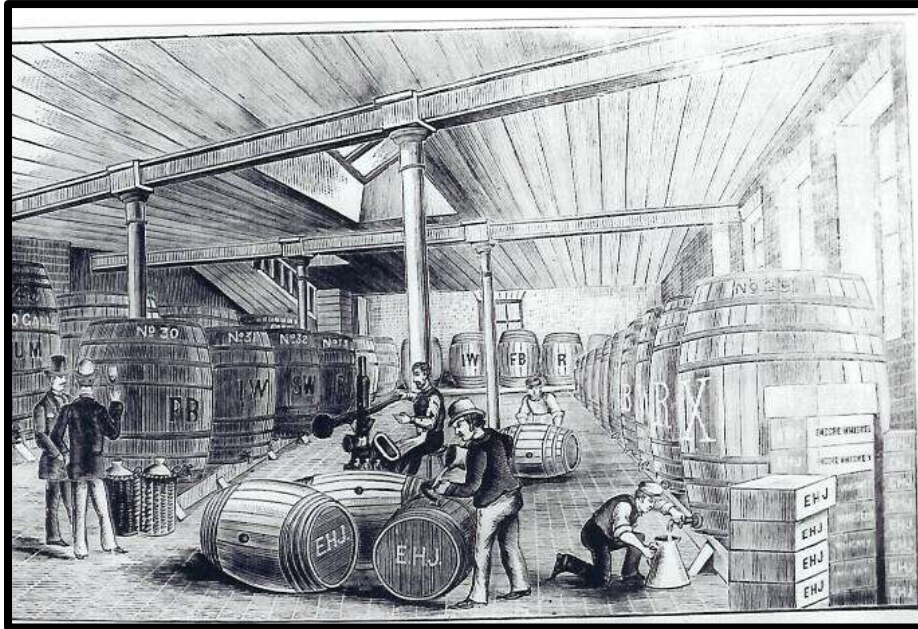


*Offices and Duty Paid Warehouses at 29 Dale End, Birmingham.*

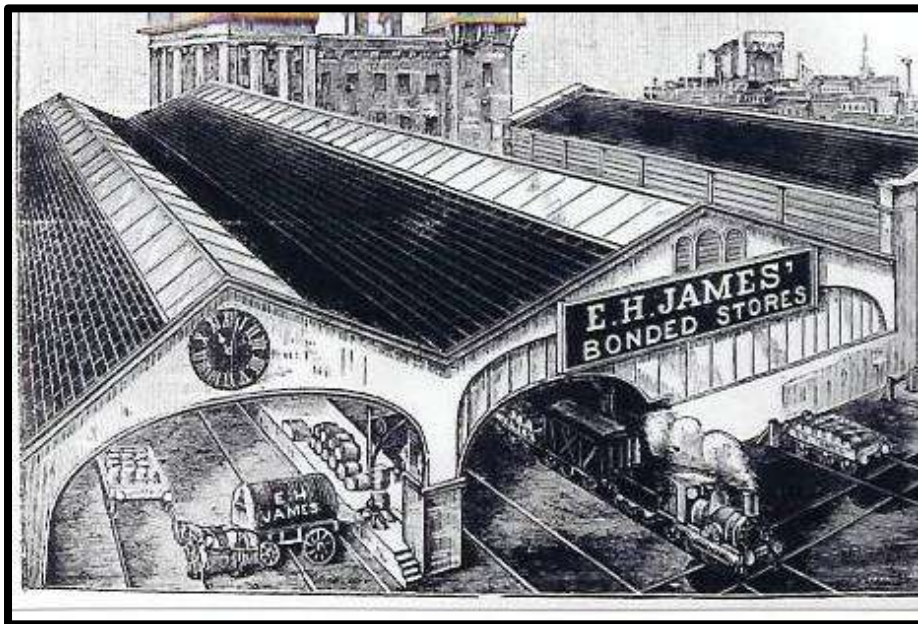


*E H 's Private Bonded Stores, Worcester Wharf, Suffolk Street.*





*First Floor of Duty Paid Spirit Warehouse, Worcester Wharf, Suffolk Street.*



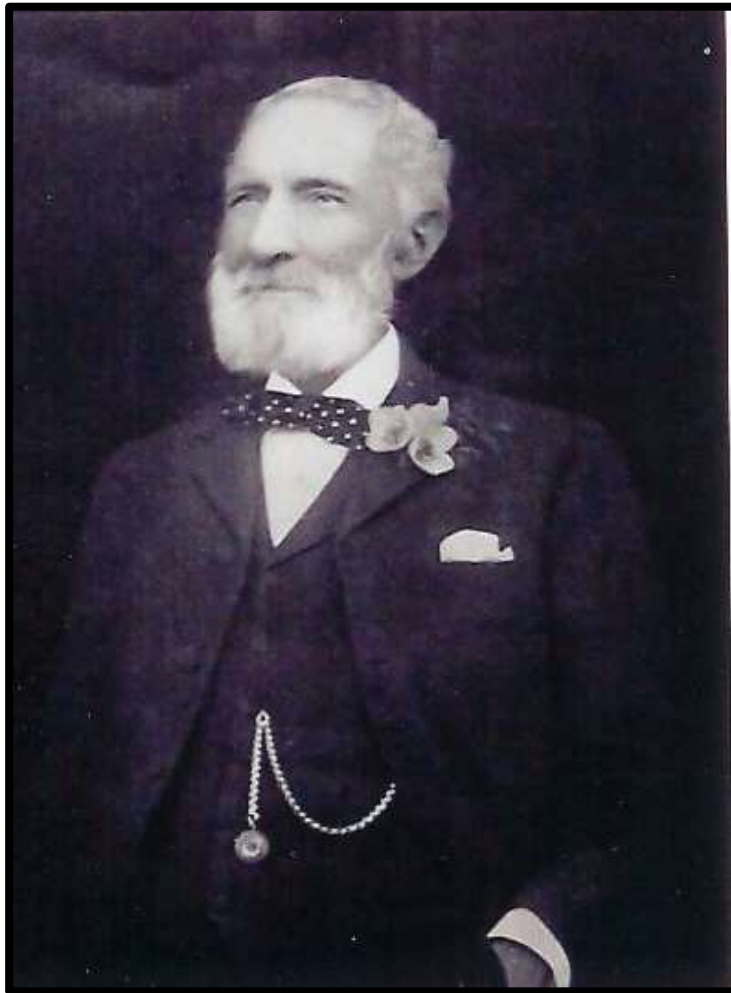
*Bonded Stores, Curzon Street, Birmingham.*

### ***Death of the Founder***

From a lowly beginning, Edward James forged for himself and his family, a life of privilege and comfort. Through hard work, calculated risks and innovation, he became a respected businessman, in what was his adopted city of Birmingham. He died aged 76 on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1904 at 'Chalford', his home in Belwell Lane, Four Oaks. He survived his wife Lucy by less than 12 months, she having died the previous year, aged 74.

He had instructed his Solicitors, Jacob Rowlands & Son of 121 Colmore Row, Birmingham to draw up his Last Will & Testament, to ensure his affairs were in order. This occurred on

the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1903 and it may well have been the death of his wife that triggered this action.



*Edward Hill James (1827-1904) - Founder "the firm."*

As befitted his stature as a successful Wine & Spirit Merchant, Edward left a substantial amount in his Will. The Gross Value of his personal estate totalled £60,709 1s 10d and, after settlement of all his outstanding debts, the Net Value stood at £36,830 10s 2d. By present day standards, this figure does not at first appear to have any great significance. If one, however, calculates the equivalent amount say 100 years later in 2004, based upon the value of the pound in 1904, it would be worth over £2,000,000. Each pound then being equal to £56.85 today, which puts his wealth fully into context.

It should also be born in mind that this only related to his personal fortune, as it did not include anything related to his business activities. Just over a month after his death, on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1904, Probate was granted and the executors and beneficiaries of his will were his six children, who were listed, as follows:

Laura Mary James of 'Chalford'; Spinster.

Benjamin James of Sutton Coldfield Wine & Spirit Merchant.

Edward Hill James (Jnr). of 'Westmoor'. Four Oaks Wine & Spirit Merchant.

Alice Lucy Wearing. of Carters Green, West Bromwich Wife of Frederick Charles Wearing.



Agnes Gertrude Edkins of 83 Park Avenue, Hull Wife of Frank Tyrrell Bakewell Edkins.  
Kitty Elizabeth James of 'Chalford' Spinster.

His two sons, Benjamin and Edward Hill (Jnr), who had worked in the family business since they were boys, succeeded him.



*Edward Hill James and his family. His two sons Edward Hill James (Jnr) and Benjamin James can be seen on his right.*

### ***Public Auction***

As, by this time, they were both owners of their own properties in Sutton Coldfield, it was decided that 'Chalford' was surplus to requirements and should be sold, together with all the contents therein. The firm of Grimley & Son, Auctioneers & Valuers of 39-40 Temple Street, Birmingham were instructed to handle all the necessary arrangements.



*Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham, from St. Phillip's Churchyard.*

A full Inventory & Valuation was made of the Household Furniture and Effects on the 28 t April 1904, which totalled £422.8s.0d. (worth approximately £24,000 by present day standards). Mr James's property interests were divided into 5 Lots and these were sold via



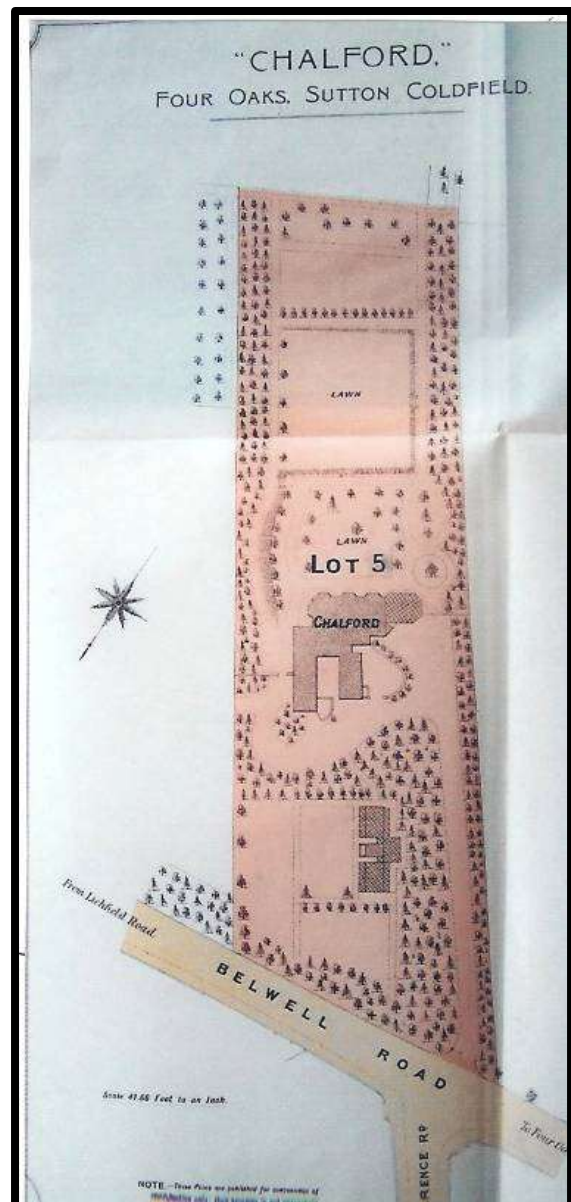
public auction. This took place at the Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 1904 commencing at 7.00pm.

The various Lots were listed, as follows:

- LOT 1.** Leasehold Ground Rents of £45.9s. 1 Od per annum on Retail Shops & other Buildings situate The Parade, Sutton Coldfield.
- LOT 2.** Leasehold Residence, known as 'Manor' Lodge' Manor Road, Sutton Coldfield.
- LOT 3.** Freehold Full-Licensed Public House. known as the 'Hope & Anchor', 18 New Street, Stourport, together with Retail Shop and Dwelling House.
- LOT 4.** Freehold Property, known as the 'Salmon Tavern', 40 Severn Street, Birmingham. together with two adjoining Dwelling Houses, 111 & 112 Suffolk Street, Birmingham.
- LOT 5.** Freehold Family Residence, known as 'Chalford' &, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield.



*Auctioneers particulars of the sale held at the Grand Hotel.*



*Plan 'Chalford' (LOT 5) in 1904.*



*The new premises of E H James, Dale End, Birmingham – Circa 1906*



*Views of front & side elevations of new premises, with delivery van.*

### ***A Decision to Re-Build***

As mentioned earlier, the premises situate, 29 Dale End had originally been built as a dwelling house and, although it had been substantially adapted for business use, it was really not ideal for a firm which wished to continue to expand.

The brothers therefore made their first major decision, less than two years after the death of their father. They came to the conclusion that a complete re-build was necessary, specially designed for the wine and spirit trade, including extensive cellars. Although there is nothing to substantiate the fact, it was highly likely William Henson and John Barnsley were both involved in the design and construction.

Most of the old property was demolished, although certain portions of the original premises were integrated into the new. The building work was completed in 1906 and it remained unaltered for the duration of the existence of the firm.

### ***First and Second World Wars***

The advent of the First World War in 1914 proved to be the start of a difficult time for the firm. The demand for wines and spirits, in a time of shortage and high wages, exceeded the available supplies. The men who had been employed at Dale End were drafted into the army and the business was carried on with part-time assistance and two Belgian refugees.

Benjamin James died in 1917, at the relatively early age of 57 and Cecil Hill James had to leave school to help in the business.

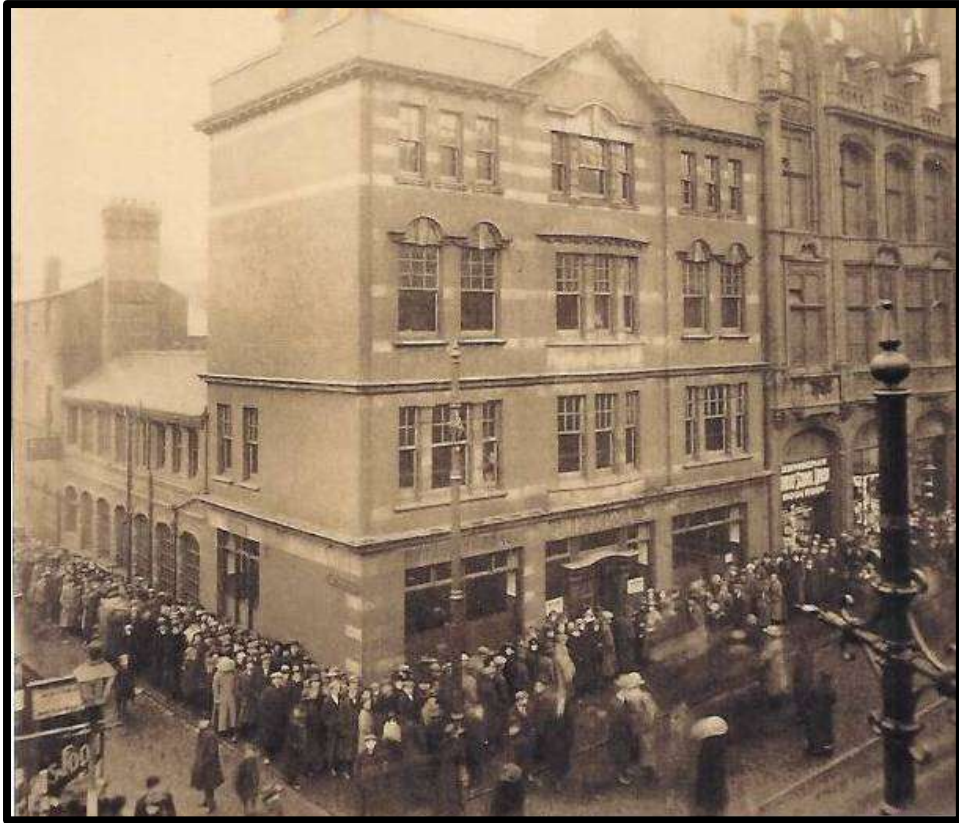


*Benjamin James. (1860-1917)*

Edward Antrobus James, after serving in the army in the latter part of the war, joined his father Edward Hill James (Jnr) and brother in 1919.

After the war ended, conditions returned to normal relatively quickly and business subsequently proceeded without any major upheavals, although signs of a change in trading conditions became apparent during the 1930s.





*View outside the premises of E H James, only a month after the end of the First World War  
Christmas 1918.*

In 1939, upon the outbreak of World War II, E. A. James, who had been serving in the Territorial Army since 1920, was called away from the business to begin a six year period of active service. He was unlucky enough therefore to have been involved in two world wars.

Conditions were far more difficult this time than during the First World War. Imported wines and spirits were scarce and, naturally, there were no supplies at all from Germany and the occupied countries. The distillation of Scotch Whisky decreased and finally stopped altogether in 1943.

The same staffing problems also arose as before, with employees called away to serve in the various branches of the armed forces. The business this time was kept going by Edward Hill James (Jnr), a clerk and a part-time assistant.

The German Air Force attacked Birmingham on numerous occasions and bombs destroyed many buildings around 29 Dale End, but the premises itself suffered no direct hits and the only damage was some broken glass, as a result of a nearby blast.

The end of the war found the business, like all others, working under extremely difficult conditions. There was a shortage of stock and other business machinery and equipment etc. and it was some years before the problems were resolved and business returned to something like normal. Wines were imported and allocated to traders on a quota system until 1949. Scotch Whisky was not in free supply until as late as 1959.

Edward Hill James (Jnr) died in 1947, after a fall at the business premises, where he was still working every day at the age of 85.





*Edward Hill James (Jnr). (1862-1947)*

His two sons Edward Antrobus and Cecil Hill James continued to run the business in partnership. In 1957 they formed it into a Limited Company, but remained the sole proprietors of the firm. The change in trading conditions, mentioned earlier, became more marked in the post-war years and the pattern of the wine and spirit trade changed completely from when the firm celebrated its Jubilee in 1911.

However, for the next 11 years the brothers continued to ensure the smooth running of the firm, including the responsibility of celebrating the centenary of E H James Limited, in 1961. On the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1968 Cecil James took the momentous decision to marry. His bride was a Mrs. Greta Bartlett, who lived nearby in Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield and at the age of 66, he also indicated the wish to retire. By this time, his brother Edward was 69 and it was mutually agreed the business should be wound down.

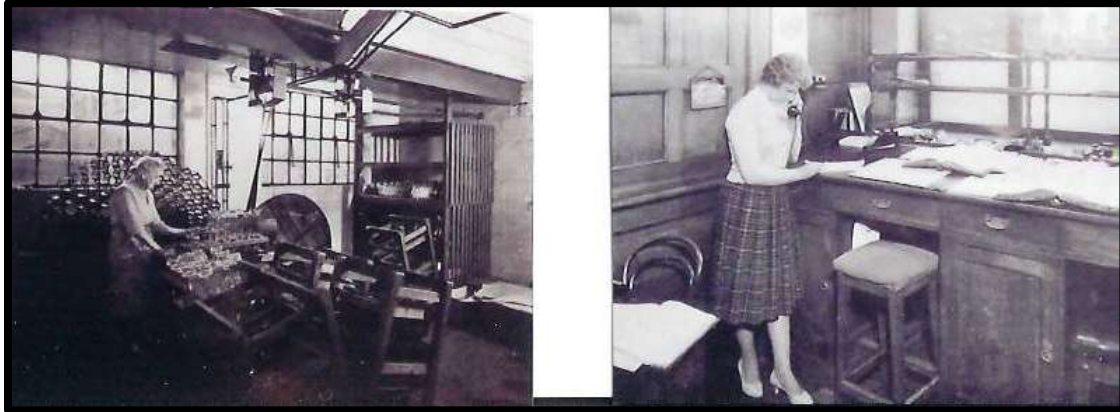


*Cecil Hill James & Edward Antrobus James.*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1968, Edward wrote to an established firm of Whisky Brokers in Edinburgh, for their advice on the disposal of their bonded stock of Scotch Whisky. On the 5<sup>th</sup> November, he advised the Editor of *Harpers Wine & Spirit Gazette* of the fact the firm,

started by his grandfather 107 years ago. was on the point of closing. He asked if they would kindly give notice to the Trade.

Chesshire Gibson & Co. were requested to offer the premises for sale and the doors of E H James Limited closed for the last time on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1968.



*Views of the Bottle Washing Room & General Office.*

Many of the old business records were donated to the Birmingham Reference Library, the cooper's tools went to the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and a library of books, papers and maps were sold to another Wine Merchant, after placing an advertisement in *Harpers*.

### ***References***

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