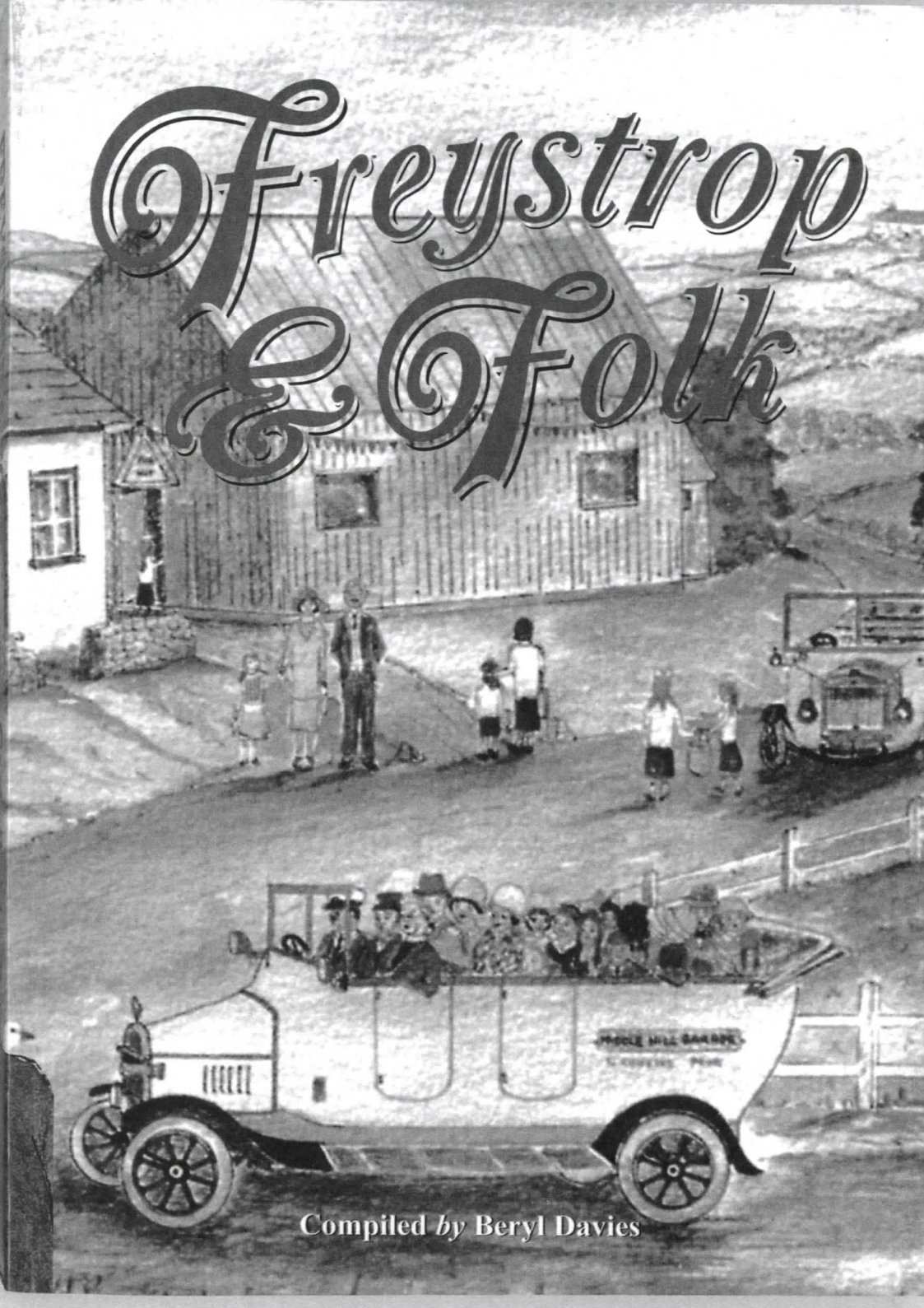


Freystrop & Folk



Compiled by Beryl Davies

THE MORMON CONNECTION

At a family gathering a few years ago it was mentioned that my husband's great aunt, who had married a 'Young', was the same family as Brigham Young, the American leader of the Mormons, or to use its proper name 'The Church of Latter Day Saints'.

A few weeks later there was an article in the Western Telegraph by Mr Vernon Scott about the Mormon missionaries preaching at Haverfordwest. The following week there was another one from Lord Gordon Parry of Neyland saying that the article had reminded him of a visit he had made in the fifties to Freystrop W.I. and how Mrs Harcourt-Roberts of Little Milford had told him that Brigham Young had stayed at her house in the 1850s when he was preaching here.

In the same vein the following week Mr Dillwyn Miles recalled a visit he had made to Little Milford some years ago to see a rare flower that had been found in the woods. Being too poorly to accompany him Mr Harcourt-Roberts gave directions through the woods saying he would find the flower by Brigham Young's cottage.

I was intrigued by all these references to the Mormons and decided to find out more. I got in touch with our great-aunt's granddaughter in Scotland who assured me that the relationship was always claimed to be true but was not discussed much as it was considered a 'shame' on the family. Then amongst her mother's papers was found a half finished account of her childhood entitled 'My Pembrokeshire Childhood'.

One paragraph reads:

"One morning my mother said to me 'your father is supposed to belong to Brigham Young, but we don't talk about it!' He was a famous Mormon in the United States of America but had been born in Freystrop the parish bordering our farm (she lived at Moor Farm, Rosemarket). At that time the Mormons practised polygamy and my mother strongly disapproved. Years later I heard that a party of Mormons had called at our farm asking for information about him. They had visited his birthplace and had been sent to my father, as we were the only 'Youngs' left living in the vicinity. A few years ago an older cousin of mine came to visit me and she could remember the Mormons' visit. She said she couldn't find any proof of his birthplace in the local church records but was adamant that it was Freystrop.

Maybe the evidence was destroyed, as the Mormons were not popular; perhaps the Mormons themselves removed the evidence as I remember a



Moses Cousins

vicar warning us about who should be allowed to see church records, as some Mormons had been known to remove entire pages from the books to compile their own extensive records.

I wrote to the headquarters of the Church of Latter Day Saints. A young man, who was also researching them promised to keep in touch, but didn't. A very pleasant lady from Newcastle Emlyn, where there is a thriving community, also promised to search their records - no joy. A distinguished gentleman and practising Mormon from Pembroke was adamant that Brigham Young had no connections with Freystrop and was far too important a man to come to preach in Pembrokeshire. I think he thought I was a long lost relative hoping for a share in his millions!

All I managed to find out (according to the internet) was that Brigham Young was born in Vermont U.S.A. and his father before him, (his grandfather could have come from here, who knows!). He took over the leadership of the Mormons in 1840 on the death of Joseph Smith who at fourteen claimed he had seen a vision and who was persecuted ever after.

Brigham Young lost all that he owned, on six occasions, as those who did not believe in his faith, drove him out of his home. They decided to move to a very isolated area outside the State laws where they could live in peace.

They went to Salt Lake in Utah. On one old map I have of the Wild West, it says that on Sept. 6th 1857 the Fancher party of 120 men women and children were murdered by Major Lee and Indians by orders of Brigham Young, but I don't know if this was ever proved.

The fact that some Mormons practised polygamy has put many people against them but this was only practised by some 3% of the community for less than sixty years when there was an excess of women, and some were asked to take another woman into their care. These were called plural wives.

At this point I decided to give up on the Freystrop connection, but then found a much better story on our own doorstep...

In 1868 two teenage girls climbed from their bedroom window at dead of night and ran away to join the Mormons. They crossed by boat from Little Milford to Lawrenny, from there to Liverpool and then to America.

These were the daughters of Moses Cousins (also spelt Cozzens) of High Freystrop. Their mother Emily neé Rowe had died in childbirth in 1857 at the age of forty-two, leaving Rebecca, George, Leticia, Elizabeth, Mary-Ann and Emily. Martha, the eldest, had already married her cousin John Cousins, against her parent's wishes, and had gone with the Mormons to America with an assisted passage and the promise of a better life. Her sisters missed her very much and felt that the worry of Martha leaving (for they did not hear from them for a considerable time) was partly the cause of their mother's death. Two years later Rebecca also died and is buried near her mother at Freystrop church.

The inscription on her tombstone reads:

*" I was a flower, fresh and green
Soon cut and no more seen
In love I lived, in peace I died
I asked for life but God denied"*

In 1865 Leticia was also married to a Mormon, by her uncle Philip Cousins, a local Pastor. She had met William D. Williams at a conference in Haverfordwest. He was president of the Welsh mission and they too left for Utah arriving in Great Salt Lake City Sept. 1866.

Moses Cousins then remarried. His new wife was Miss Eliza Young, who kept the shop at Silver Stream. She did not get on with her stepdaughters and they resented her, so they remained with their brother at High Freystrop. It was eighteen-year-old Elizabeth and seventeen-year-old Mary-Ann who ran away to join their sisters, sailing on the John Bright from Liverpool on 3rd June 1868 with seven hundred other converts.

One story tells that one of their friends died during the voyage and not wishing to bury her at sea they packed her coffin with salt to preserve the

body and had a proper funeral when they reached land.

After the girls left, the Mormons were held responsible for their departure so were forbidden by law to proselyte (preach for converts) in the area, those who persisted were tarred and feathered and driven out of the county.

A few years later the youngest daughter Emily went to visit her sisters, with her father's blessing, on the understanding that she would return home. Her stay was extended and Moses died before she could return, so she never did. A descendant of Eliza Young said that her grandmother could remember her mother telling her how she stitched gold sovereigns into strips of flannel to post to the girls as their 'share' when Moses, their father died.

Over the years a number of their descendants have visited Freystrop looking for their 'Cousins' relatives. At first they were not welcome. Mrs Lal Cousins of Targate tells of how the door was slammed against them but later generations were more interested and now distant cousins regularly correspond. One visitor to Targate said that her mother had been born there and had many happy times there. Various nephews and nieces, then great, then great-great relatives have called, one whilst at university in Scotland.

One visitor in 1963 was the daughter of Elizabeth, called Emily Elizabeth Davis Schettler, who was then in her ninetieth year. She was well travelled having visited almost every country in the world. She had left the Mormon faith on her marriage.

In 1955 she had written an account of her mother's life as she had remembered it, from her birth in Freystrop to her death in Utah. Her account of life at Freystrop was very fanciful. Moses, who was a farm bailiff, she had down as the village squire and the family described as 'gentry'. Their friends were Dukes and Barons! But the account of their voyage and their life in Utah makes fascinating reading. I am told that a handwritten copy is available in the Record Office.

Three months after arriving in Utah Elizabeth 'married' or was 'sealed' to Richard J. Davis whom she had met in Haverfordwest. He was also Welsh having been born in Glamorganshire. He was twenty-two years older than Elizabeth and already had two 'wives', Rebecca and Phoebe and fifteen children. Each wife had her own home. Elizabeth had a house in town, which may have been communal, but she staked a claim on 160 acres and built a farm where she kept cattle and horses and where she made cheese and bottled fruit, which she traded for other goods; her husband visited when he could.

Elizabeth and Richard had thirteen children but one was stillborn and another died a few weeks old but the rest prospered and were well educated, most attending university. At least two were lawyers and some were teachers. Emily Elizabeth worked at Davis University, Davis County.

Elizabeth's children were:

Moses Couzzens Davis	born	Aug.	1869	
George Miles		Mar.	1872	died at 3 weeks
Emily Eliz.		Jan.	1873	
Edward Harvey		Aug.	1875	
Mary Ann		Aug.	1876	
John Charles		Sept.	1878	
Joseph		Oct.	1880	
Richard Soton		Oct.	1882	
Robert		Jan.	1884	
Wilford		Jan.	1887	
Seymour		Aug.	1889	
Leticia		Aug.	1891	twins
Martha		Aug.	1891	stillborn

By his other wives the children were:

William	born	1851	
Margaret		1854	
Rebecca		1856	
Ann Gwenllian		1858	
Richard Elias		1859	
Mary Elizabeth		1861	
Thomas		1863	
David		1865	
Amelia Ann		1864	
Rachel Elizabeth		1865	
John Edmond		1869	
Martha and Phoebe		1870	twins
Hysum		1871	
Evan John		1873	

A total of twenty-eight children.

When the eldest daughter Martha and her husband John left for Utah they were amongst the first pilgrims to move to Utah. All their children were put into store and each family were issued with a hand

Emily Elizabeth writes:

"After arriving from Boston by train in compartments not much better than cattle-cars, they remained 3 weeks in Iowa City for their carts to be made then the company prepared to walk across the plains. They were offered many inducements to remain in the east but they were anxious to get to Zion.

The company walked the first 300 miles to winter quarters on the Missouri river. Many people made fun of the saints pulling carts but the weather was fine and the roads good and the saints thought it a glorious way to get to Zion. Each person was allowed 17lb of clothing luggage and 100lb of flour. When the flour was gone you got more from the supply wagons. At first there was a little coffee and bacon but this soon ran out and all they had to eat was flour and water cakes. After some months of travelling the company was put on half rations and then without food for two days until help came from the Valley of Salt Lake. John was a big strong man having been a professional boxer in his teens. He crossed and re-crossed the rivers many times during the journey, carrying women on his back and children in his arms - always done willingly.

On one occasion the group were successful in killing a buffalo, it was too old to eat but the fat was used to oil the carts. If anyone became sick and unable to walk they had to be put in their own carts and pulled by their own family. In all they walked over 3000 miles to their promised land."

John Cousins became the leader of a small group of men and established a new settlement in an area known as Clover Creek. He laid out a new town putting up fences, digging ditches and building roads and bridges. Today this town is called 'Montpelier'. John then set up a freighting business between Montpelier and Evanston, Wyoming and carried mail using ponies and toboggans.

In the spring of 1882 the Oregon short line railroad began construction work in Idaho and John and a Joseph M. Phelps (another local name) obtained a grading contract from which they made a lot of money.

John had also established two farms, some hay land and livestock and began operating a thriving butchery business.

John Cozzens (Cozens or Cousins) was the eldest of nine children of James Cozzens and Dinah Thomas of Freystrop Cross. His father was killed in the mines at the age of thirty-seven and John was left the breadwinner. At the age of nineteen he married Martha and soon after they heard the missionaries of the Latter Day Saints preach the gospel and were converted.

They left for America on April 19th 1856 from Liverpool on the ship Samuel Curling arriving at Boston May 23rd 1856.

Utah at that time was an independent state and did not come under the rules of the government so they could practise their own religion without prejudice and practice the 'Patriarchal Order of Plural Marriage'.

Early in the year of 1870 John and Martha separated, as they had no children. Martha obtained a divorce and moved to Evanston, Wyoming where she later remarried and lived to a good age.

In July of that year John married two wives, on the same day, Emily Almira Merrill and Sarah Jane Perkins. They were good friends but each had her own home. Both reared large families and both died of gallstones aged 70. By this time John had been ordained a priest.

During the crusade on polygamy John was forced into hiding but in 1890 he was arrested and convicted to serve six months in the Boise penitentiary and pay a large fine. In the autumn of 1905 he and his son Luke died of typhoid fever.

John Couzzens was a pioneer to Utah 1856, to Idaho in 1863 and to Big Horn, Wyoming in 1890. He was the father of thirteen sons, and five daughters. He was a faithful Latter-day Saint, a kind and just father and husband, and a true friend.

Emily Elizabeth sums up her mother's life as follows:

"Elizabeth who was born, reared and educated in the land of the Magna Carta had the spirit of liberty in her veins. With this spirit she sailed across the wild ocean, travelled the undulating plains, crossed rivulets, creeks and rivers, rising higher and higher to the table lands of the great rocky mountains where crags, rocks, glaciers and cliffs had not been disturbed for centuries. Once in a while a trail or path made by buffalo and Indian helped to show the way through the land.

Then there was the decent down down into the desert valley six thousand feet above the level of the sea.

Here Elizabeth who knew the princely city of Haverfordwest met the worthy pioneers who were also mostly of British stock. She shared their hardships, tears and exhilarations, which seem at first like a contradiction in truth.

Now all is changed... the old west with its wagon trains, its herds of buffalo and wandering bands of Indians are gone. The grass-grown trails through the hills have been eaten away. The Bear Lake we used to visit still spreads for thirty miles like billows of blue but now tourist cabins surround it and people come from far to bathe in its waters.

The hot Lava springs where we bathed free was where Indians of warring tribes ceased hostilities to plunge together into its magical waters and freighters and pioneers following the old Oregon trail stopped for days to recuperate.

In 1871 there was no town of Blackfoot; Idaho Falls was known as Eagle Rock. The Postneuf River above the hot springs was full of trout and swift like the wind, The Snake River Valley, which was a sea of sage bush, is now a fruitful land because of irrigation canals. The old stage station sites in Utah, Idaho and Montana are of the past.

Elizabeth Couzzens Davis died Tuesday morning at 8 o'clock Oct. 24th 1905 at her home in Ogden City Utah”

Other events that were going on in their area at that time but not mentioned in Emily Elizabeth's story were:

- Vigilantes hanged killer Slade July 1864.
- Jesse and Frank James operated there between 1873-79.
(also reputed to have Pembroke connections).
- Gold found in 1874.
- Oscar Wilde toured the area in 1882.