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JAMES BAINES

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by

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On Sunday, October 25th 1812, William Baines, Schoolmaster was married to Miss Mary Picton, Confectioner, of Richmond Row at St. Thomas' Church. William Baines was later a sugar refiner and had his works at 6, Jackson Lane.

His wife opened a confectioner's shop at 85 Duke Street. William Baines was a very delicate man, suffering from chest trouble, and died at the early age of 37 on the 17th of June, 1829, being buried in St. James' cemetery. He left his wife with a young family of one girl and three boys. One son, James Baines, the subject of this paper, was born on October 26th 1823 over the shop.

After William's death his wife carried on the shop at 12, Duke Street, opposite St. Mark's Church, and the sugar refinery, in partnership with a Mr. Rigby, at Belle Vue, Derby Road, Bootle. Just before his death William Baines had taken a house at 1 Rathbone Street, and his wife and children lived here until 1848.

Another of the sons, William, is mentioned in the Directory of 1841 as being a molasses merchant, living at 1 Rathbone Street. He was an elder brother of James. Of the other brother nothing is known.

1837 Mrs. Baines was appointed confectioner in Liverpool to Her Royal Highness Princess Victoria. Lord Sandon presented a handsome cake, forwarded to him by Mrs. Baines, to Her Royal Highness on the anniversary of her birthday.

Mrs. Baines had taken a house in Rodney Street and turned it into a first-class boarding house, with her daughter assisting her. A Mr. John Grant Morris, clerk in a coal merchant's office, boarded with her and married her daughter Mary, in August 1835 at Trinity Church. Mr. Morris opened his own coal business, and was Mayor of Liverpool in 1866/7, living at Allerton Priory during the 80's.

James Baines, according to his own account, started to serve his time as an engineer when he left school. But he did not like the dirty work and having to get up in the morning, and he soon gave up this employment. He then entered the office of his uncle, Richard, at 2 Wollington Buildings, Poole Lane, who was a shipbroker. In the Directory for 1843 James is described as a gentleman living at 1 Rathbone Street.

In 1845 he commenced, in partnership with a Mr. John Hamilton, as a merchant and shipbroker. This partnership was soon dissolved and in 1847 he became a partner of John Carter as a shipbroker at 3 India Buildings.

By 1848 Carter and Baines owned three ships. "Charles Brownell" a ship of 390 tons, "General Sale" a barque of 351 tons, and "Sisters" a barque of 744 tons. These vessels were in the Valparaiso and China trades. On February 18th of that year they were advertising vessels for Boston, New Orleans, Ceylon, Valparaiso, and Rio, for which ships they were brokers.

On the 4th of May, 1848 an advertisement appeared in the paper that "On Tuesday last at Alctear, Mr. James Baines, of this town, was married to Anne, eldest daughter of the late John Browne, Esq., of Netherton". By September of that year he was advertising the barque "Lady of the Lake" for Bombay, in conjunction with Rankin, Gilmour & Co.

After his marriage Baines took up his residence in Holly Street, Fairfield, with his office still at 3 India Buildings. He also seems to have carried on his father's business as a sugar refiner, as he appears in the papers of 1849 as sugar refiner and shipbroker, with his works at 6 Jackson Lane, formerly his father's works.

In 1851 he was living at 19 Upper Canning Street, with his office at Commercial Bank Buildings, 6 Cook Street.

By this time he was working on his own as a shipbroker and had also commenced to buy ships. In 1850 he owned the three ships "Cleopatra", "Maria" and "Express". All these vessels were Canadian built and in 1851 he bought the "Flora McDonald", also Canadian-built.

The year 1852 was a momentous one for the Port of Liverpool. Gold had been discovered in large quantities in Australia, and Gibbs Bright & Co's Eagle Line "Albatross" brought the first consignment of gold, £50,000 worth, into the Mersey on August 31st of that year. With the arrival of this ship and cargo the shipowners of Liverpool began to wake up to the fact that there was a new opening for trade and emigrants. Until 1851 the tide of emigration had flowed towards the United States and British North America. But, after the discovery of gold and the abolition of penal labour and transportation of criminals to Australia, a larger number of emigrants began to take ship for Australia and New Zealand. On July 3rd 1852 it was reported in the Melbourne papers that two men had taken 36 pounds weight of gold from three buckets of "stuff". It was no wonder that Australia attracted emigrants in their thousands.

The flow of emigrants from Northern England and the large imports of gold soon roused the merchants of Liverpool, and more ships were called for to cope with the increased traffic. Shipbuilders of New Brunswick and the other seaboard states of Canada turned out ships in their hundreds from the shipbuilding yards which sprang up, literally, in a night. Some were built up small creeks and in many places which had to be first cleared of vegetation. They were sailed across to England, full of timber and consigned to agents who sold them as quickly as they arrived. Edward Oliver and Henry Fernie were two of the best known agents for the sale of soft wood ships from Canada. Edward Oliver failed in 1854, but Henry Fernie founded the well-known firm of Henry Fernie & Sons, of Rumford Street, the last representative of which died in 1933.

Some of the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia shipbuilders eventually retired from building and, coming over to Liverpool, set up as shipowners. W. & R. Wright and Edmund F. Roberts and William Roberts, sons of David Roberts, being two of the most noted builders who eventually owned large fleets in Liverpool.

The impression has become widespread that practically all the wood ships came from the United States. The famous four magnificent sisters "Lightning", "James Baines", "Donald MacKay" and "Champion of the Seas", built by Donald McKay at East Boston, Mass., for James Baines, have, not unnaturally, fostered the idea that all the fast ships came from the United States seaboard. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia can claim, however, as many fast and beautiful clippers as ever came from the States during the 50's of last century.

The first ship of the White Star Line was a St. John ship, and the phenomenal rise of the Black Ball Line started with the purchase of the "Marco Polo", the work of a British North American yard, and a small yard at that.

These wood shipbuilders flourished in the 50's and 60's of last century, but now, alas, their glory has departed and the yards, which once rang to the sound of mallet and saw, and the cheers of the workmen when a new ship was launched - which happened very frequently - are now left to the gulls and the melancholy peculiar to all deserted hives of industry.

Although Donald McKay built his most famous ships in Boston, he was a Nova Scotian, grandson of a British Army Officer. His wonderful ships have overshadowed those of most of his contemporaries and they certainly made the renown of the Black Ball Line of Australian Packets. To the one person who had heard of Pilkington and Wilson and their famous "White Star" and "Red Jacket", a hundred have heard of "Marco Polo" and "Lightning". Even the name of the Black Ball Line has been handed down to posterity in that well-known chanter "Hurrah for the Black Ball Line".

The term "publicity agent" had not been heard of in Baines' time, in fact it is quite a modern innovation in shipping circles. But both James Baines and his noted captain, James Nicol Forbes, belonged to a class who loved to be in the limelight, and who took all precautions that they were well forward when there was any chance of being heard or of showing themselves.

There is no doubt that the decade 1851 to 1860 was a very prosperous one for the Port of Liverpool. Many well-known shipowning firms were founded during that period, and existing ones made their fortunes in the attempt to supply transport for the rush of emigrants to the new Golconda.

During 1852, 36,253 emigrants left Liverpool for Australia. On the 31st of December 1857 the tonnage registered in Liverpool was 936,022 tons, and in 1858 it had increased to 953,955 tons. In 1857 the vessels entering the port were 4,528, with a tonnage of 2,329,928 tons. Vessels cleared outward were 5,003 with a tonnage of 2,535,952 tons. Liverpool ships carried three quarters of the emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia and New Zealand.

In 1857 155,647 emigrants left Liverpool out of 212,875 from all ports of the Kingdom.

The first announcement of James in business for himself appears in Gore's General Advertiser on March 9th 1848:-

FOR HONG KONG, CALCUTTA & BOMBAY

For fine goods only.

Positively first ship after the "Robert Pulsford", having all her weight and rough freight on board and the bulk of her cargo in course of shipment. Loading West side of Salthouse Dock.

-4-

The Splendid Ship  
"Guisachan",  
Workington-built,  
P. Ord, Master.  
474 tons, Al at Lloyds for 12 years, coppered and a  
most superior conveyance for goods and passengers.  
For freight, etc., apply to:-  
Potter Bros., Merchants, or to  
James Baines, 3 India Buildings.

On April 27th the same advertisement appeared with  
the name of G. B. Wainwright of 13, Rurford Place as broker instead  
of Potter Bros. Baines' first advertisement as a shipowner appeared  
in the Advertiser for February 1852, as follows:-

Under contract to the Commissioners  
To be despatched from Birkenhead on the 14th April  
For Portland Bay, Australia.  
The splendid ship "Flora MacDonald",  
Al at Lloyds, 674 tons registered, copper fastened  
and newly coppered, sails remarkable fast and has  
splendid accommodation for cabin passengers.  
For freight and passage apply to:-  
James Baines & Co., 6 Cook Street.

On May 20th of the same year appears another advertisement  
with Messrs. Pilkington and Wilson, later of White Star fame, as  
loading brokers:-

New Liverpool Line of Australian Packets.  
"Maria" .....J.N. Forbes (who has had much experience  
in the trade)  
"Bhurtpoor" .....Geo. Bainbridge.  
"Northumberland" .....J. B. Smith.  
"Argo" .....C. Mills.

For freight and passage apply to:-  
Pilkington & Wilson.  
James Baines.

On the same day, May 20th, appeared an advertisement of  
"Marco Polo" which he had just bought:-

Under engagement to sail on 21st June.  
For Melbourne and Port Phillip.  
The splendid new frigate built ship  
"Marco Polo"  
J. N. Forbes, Commander.

Is the largest vessel ever despatched from Liverpool to  
Australia and is expected to sail as fast as any ship afloat.

Carries two surgeons and has vacancies for a few naval  
cadets.

The "Marco Polo" was bought in June 1852, James Baines  
holding 32 shares and T.M. MacKay, shipbuilder of Liverpool, and  
Captain James Nicol Forbes the remainder.

The partners with Baines in the Black Ball Line were  
Mr. Taylor and Mr. Thomas Millar MacKay, later of the firm of T.M.  
MacKay & Co., of London, Mr. Samuel Robert Graves, a shipowner and  
member of Parliament for Liverpool ("Shipping Telegraph" 28/8/1863) } *K*  
and Mr. T. Harrison, shipowner of Liverpool and African trader.

Captain James Nicol Forbes was appointed commander of  
her, being transferred from the "Maria", in which ship he was relieved  
by Captain W. Jackson. Born in Aberdeen in 1821, Forbes was one of  
the finest publicity agents that Baines could have chosen. Like  
Baines, he loved the limelight and knew the value of stunts. At the

end of his first voyage in the "Marco Polo" to Melbourne he brought his ship into the Mersey with a canvas placard between the masts with "THE FASTEST SHIP IN THE WORLD" painted on it. The round passage had been made in 5 months and 21 days - quickest on record and something to be proud of. It was no wonder that Forbes, with his boastful nature, announced to his owner and passengers on the start of his second voyage that he intended to astonish God Almighty as he had just astonished the world.

In 1851 Baines moved his residence to Peel Terrace, Canning Street, living at number 19, where his four children were born. There were three daughters and a son. The daughters were, Mary Esther, who later married a Mr. Ellison, a lumber merchant of Vancouver, and finally settled out there; Annie, his second daughter, born on the 11th of August 1855, Captain J.W. Forbes being her godfather, married Mr. H. J. B. Armstrong, the vicar of Broughton near Chester, who was appointed Vicar of St. Andrews in Eccles, in 1879. On August 21st 1857 a son was born to Mrs. Baines and was christened James Picton Baines.

James Picton Baines died at Eccles of asthma and chest trouble on the 16th of July 1877. Edith, the youngest daughter, was born in 1862. She was trained at Guy's Hospital, London, as a nurse and she died of chest trouble and dropsy at the age of 43 in January 1905.

In 1870 Baines gave up his house in Canning Street and went to live at Elm Lodge in Princes Park, where he kept a large staff of servants, 5 maids, a coachman and a groom. He treated his servants very well, sending them to the theatre once a week in turn. Baines had a riding ground made at the back of his house and each of his children had a horse, a riding master being engaged to teach them riding every week.

On the 22nd of August 1872 Mrs. Baines died, and left £1,000 to each of her daughters, the money being so tied up that Baines could not touch it. In 1873 Baines moved to 244 Upper Parliament Street, and the following year to 71 Bedford Street.

By this time his business had taken a downward curve. Starting with one vessel in 1850 he rapidly rose to be the largest shipowner and charterer in Liverpool. In November 1857 the Liverpool Borough Bank failed for over £4,000,000, but Baines was so well established by that time, he was able to weather the financial crisis of that year.

By 1858 he owned 86 ships and had over 4,000 men in his employ. In 1865 he owned 65 ships and had many others on charter. I have traced over 260 ships as having sailed under his flag between the years 1850 and 1876. In the latter year he only owned one ship, the "Cavour".

There was an old established banking firm of Israel Barned & Co., in Liverpool. When Israel Barned died he left his banking business to his kinsmen, the Mozley family. They failed in May 1866 and brought down many large firms in the crash. This was also the beginning of the end of Baines and his Black Ball Line. EDW  
OZLEY,  
1866

In February 1868 Baines stopped payment of bills due to Gibbs, Bright & Co., amounting to £18,750. These bills had been guaranteed by Barned's Banking Company. Gibbs Bright took the Bank to Court and claimed for the amount from them, but an agreement was arrived at between Gibbs Bright and Baines and the liquidators of Barned's Bank.

Baines struggled along, taking in Mr. Taylor, of the firm of T.M. MacKay & Co., as partner in 1868.

After the death of his wife Baines and his family went to live at Eccles, near Manchester, for a time, his two elder daughters taking up teaching as a profession, until they were married in 1879, when Baines gave up keeping house. Two of his maids were cousins to Mrs. Isbister, wife of William Isbister, a dockgateman. Through one of them he was introduced to Mr. Isbister and he arranged with him to take a house, Baines being responsible for half the rent and all the taxes. He went to live with the Isbisters at 24 Dexter Street, Toxteth Park, in October 1880, but soon after that date they moved to 24 Nile Street, off St. James Road.

Baines sold his last ship, the "Soraphina", in 1882 and after that he worked as a shipbroker in a small way. Mr. Kellock, of the firm C. W. Kellock & Co., often put a little business in his way. He became interested in the ship "Three Brothers", owned by the City of Liverpool Ship Co., of 3 Cable Street. Several men shared with him in this ship, but he eventually appears to have been done out of his share of the profits. The case was taken to Court, but Baines failed to get any redress. This distressed him so much that he was ill for some time after.

Baines never drank during the day nor during business hours. He did not smoke, but was a great reader. For weeks after this last failure he sat in the evenings at home with his books. He gradually recovered and about 1886 he persuaded Mr. Cohen, of Lewis's of Ranelagh Street, to buy the "Great Eastern", which had just so come to Liverpool. Mr. Cohen paid £15,000 for her and she was moored in the Sloyne as a show ship. A wine bar was installed and a roaring business was done, people preferring to pay a shilling entrance fee to see the "Great Eastern" and her wine bar, than to go to New Brighton. When the time came round for the licence to be renewed, the hotel people at Eastham complained that she was ruining their business, and the licence of the "Great Eastern" was cancelled. A friend of Baines, a Mr. Worsley, a cotton merchant of Manchester, wanted to run the show on the same lines, but Baines advised him not to. A Greek merchant of Liverpool offered £5,000 more for the ship, but Mr. Worsley was determined to run the show. Naturally it failed, with no wine bar for the great attraction.

At the beginning of 1889 James Baines fell ill of cyrrhosis of the liver, and he was nursed by Mrs. Isbister, who was a nurse by profession, his daughter, Mrs. Armstrong, and his cousin Miss Shaw.

All his daughters were present at his death, which happened on the 8th of March 1889 at 24 Nile Street. His nephew, T. Case Morris, of "Boechwood", Grassondale, attended to the funeral arrangements, which were carried out by Lee's of Basnett Street, and he was interred in Smithdown Road Cemetery on the 13th of March in the same grave as his wife and son. His daughter, Edith, was also buried in the same grave in 1905.

Thus passed the most famous shipowner of his day.

A small fair man with red hair, very energetic and talkative, and of a very generous nature, James Baines stood about five foot three or four, and always wore a frock coat, stock collar and bow tie. Sir William Forwood stated in his book that Baines never appeared to be able to buy a hat sufficiently large enough for his big head, and he also remarks that he was always active and pushing. Mrs. Isbister said that he was very generous. Baines himself used to say that there was no one more eager to make money than he was, but when he



did it went vory quickly. My. Isbister, with whom Baines lived in 1880, said that, whenever the conversation of the deck men turned to shipowners, men who had known Baines said the money used to fly like shells among them.

He owned in the later 50's the finest clipper passenger ships in the world, the four sisters, "James Baines", "Lightning", "Champion of the Seas", and "Donald MacKay" being, perhaps, the best known.

A great deal has been published about Baines dying in poverty and in a common lodging house. He did neither, nor did he ever receive charity from friends. His brother-in-law, Mr. Morris, occasionally paid his doctor's bills for him.

It has also been stated that the reason for Baines' failure was that he never went in for iron ships, but persisted in keeping to the wood clippers of Canada. This again is wrong, as he owned several iron ships and even went in for steamers. Baines himself told the Isbisters that the reason for his failure was the crash of Barned's Bank in 1866. It says a great deal for his business ability that, even after that, he was able to carry on in the Australian passenger trade against great competition.

His ships were splendidly fitted up for the conveyance of passengers. They were taken up by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners to take out Government emigrants to Australia and New Zealand. His three clippers, "James Baines", "Lightning" and "Champion of the Seas" were taken over by the Government to carry troops to India during the Mutiny, as being the fastest ships to be obtained, and Queen Victoria visited them while at Portsmouth and highly praised them.

As early as 1855 Baines owned steamers and on February 8th of that year he advertised his powerful steamer "Vestal" as about to be despatched to Balaklava for the conveyance of parcels, also taking parcels for the military hospitals at Malta and Scutari.

In 1859 he joined with Gibbs Bright & Co., in an amalgamation of their two lines, the Black Ball and Eagle Lines. This amalgamation was dissolved soon after the failure of Barned's Bank in 1866.

In the ordinary passenger ship to Australia of the 40's and 50's the conditions of life in the steerage were wretched. Sleeping berths were huddled together, necessitating climbing over one another to get to an inside bunk. There was no privacy, no washing accommodation except at the common tap, no saloon or seating accommodation except on the hatchways. The food was brought round in tin buckets, and junks of beef and pork were forked out by the steward and placed in the passengers' pannikins, and in the same way potatoes and duff were served out.

But in Baines' ships this system was gradually changed and better conditions were enforced. The lower holds were used for cargo, luggage and provisions. The lower 'tween decks were divided into three sections, the after end for single women, amidships married people, with single men right forward. The main deck was fitted in the same manner, with the seamen's forecassle right forward in the bows on that deck. The captain's and officers' cabins were on the spar deck, from which deck two large companionways led down to the main deck for passengers' use.

Daily rations to each passenger were:-

8 oz. of biscuit, 6 oz. of flour, 3 oz. of oatmeal, and three quarts of water. On Saturday they received 6 oz. of beef. Three times a week they had 6 oz. of pork and 6 oz. of preserved meat. Four times a week 2 oz. of raisins,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of suet,  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. of tea, and 2 oz. of treacle.  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint of peas three times a week, 4 oz. of rice twice a week,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of coffee three times a week, with 4 oz. of sugar three times a week, and 2 oz. of butter twice a week. They also received weekly 1 gill of mixed pickles,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of mustard, 2 oz. of salt, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of pepper.

Women received the same as men, children between 1 and 14 years of age half this amount, and infants under one year 1 quart of water daily, but no rations.

For first class passengers the poop was used as a ladies cabin with the dining saloon on deck forward of the poop. Berths in separate staterooms were on the after part of the main deck.

The ceiling of the saloon was in maple with pilasters panelled with silvered glass, coins of various countries being amongst the decorations. Saloon doors were panelled in stained glass, bearing figures of commerce and industry. In the centre of the saloon was a table made of thick plate glass, to give light to the dormitories below.

The above is a description of the saloon of the "Marco Polo" and would fit most of the passenger ships of that day,

All "Black Ballers" had a black painted hull, the whole of the inside being painted white. Their waterways were blue, with their masts white, mastheads and yards being black. Their stunsail booms were bright with black ends.

Baines' ships carried surgeons and some of them even had chaplains. He also carried naval cadets and German brass bands. One of the main items in his advertisement was that they all had chess, backgammon and draught boards for the amusement of passengers.

In 1857 Baines was advertising:-

"Steam under 60 days eclipsed", and stated that the "Marco Polo" arrived in Liverpool 8 days before the "Royal Charter", The "Sir W.F. Williams" also beat the "Royal Charter" by 15 days, and the "Joseph Tarratt" beat the steamer "Istamboul" from London by 3 days.

His ships were always making records. The "Marco Polo" made the first in 1852 in her round voyage of 5 months and 21 days. The "Lightning" made the passage from Melbourne to Liverpool in 63 days, and Liverpool to Melbourne and back in 5 months and 8 days.

In 1857 the "Commodore Perry" made the record to Sydney of 72½ days, and in that year Baines advertised his interest in steam to Australia for the first time on June 4th. He was agent for the European and Australia Royal Mail Co's powerful steamers, calling at Plymouth for mails.

On the evening of December 20th 1859 there was landed on the wharf at Geelong from the "Lightning" a shipment of game consigned to Mr. Thomas Austin, of Barwon Park. There were 56 partridges, 4 hares, and 26 wild rabbits. On the following day they were forwarded to their destination. Little did Mr. Austin think what a curse those rabbits would become to Australia!

On April 12th, 1864, he was advertising the S.S. "Pennsylvania" from Liverpool to New York, and was acting as 3rd Class passenger agent for the British & North American Royal Mail Company (later Cunard Line), and the National Steam Navigation Company.

A regular shipping notice of Baines was headed:-

"BLACK BALL LINE OF AUSTRALIAN PACKETS"

and proceeded as follows:-

This Line, since its establishment, has conveyed more passengers to Australia than any other in the Kingdom. The fastest passages on record have been made by the following vessels:

"Lightning"	.....	63 days from Melbourne.
"Ocean Chief"	.....	72 days to Melbourne.
"Marco Polo"	.....	74 days to Melbourne.
"Indian Queen"	.....	Round voyage 6 months and 10 days.



All owned by the Proprietors of the above Line and regularly established, sailing between Liverpool and Melbourne.

Forwarding passengers to Adelaide, Geelong, Sydney and Launceston at ship's expense.

Carried a full band of music, as well as chess, backgammon and draught boards for the amusement of passengers.

All passengers and luggage landed on the wharf.

An average cargo home from Melbourne consisted of bales of wool, pig iron, bones and horns, copper ore, casks of tallow and the inevitable boxes of specie.

The passenger rates were to Sydney, Saloon £60 and £65; 2nd Cabin £35; 3rd Cabin £25, and Steerage £18.

The first public mention of the "Black Ball Line" was by advertisement of June 3rd, 1852. Where Baines got his flag has never been discovered. It caused a lot of trouble for a time with the Black Ball Line of Packets from New York, who even asked Baines to change his flag.

The Liverpool papers all gave long obituary notices after his death. One stated that after the failure of Baines's Bank Mr. Baines always worked hard keeping his head up, and though he did not retrieve his lost position, yet none could say that he ever did a shabby trick.

The "Courier" said it was a matter of regret that the prosperity that Mr. James Baines enjoyed in earlier life did not pursue him in later years. His genius and business capacity remained with him to the close, and his advice and experience were sought for and utilized by more prosperous members of the mercantile community, but with little personal advantage to himself. He never took any part in political or other public matters. It went on to say that he was keenly intelligent and urbane in manner, generous to the point of lavishness when he had the means, and that he was popular with all who possessed his personal acquaintance.

E. A. WOODS.

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