

History of John F Harvey & Sons to Second World War as Written By Robert Burnie ACA Grandson of the Founder – in 1994 – Currently Residing in Australia

The founder of the firm, John Francis Harvey was born at Fremington a hamlet just outside Barnstaple, Devonshire on 1st April 1846. He was the son of John Harvey, described in his son's Birth Certificate as a Farm Labourer but is now believed to have been a small Tenant Farmer.

He was educated at a village school to which he walked daily for four miles across open fields. His aptitudes are recorded as having been, apart from the Three R's, drawing, painting and rudimentary wood and iron work.

At about the age of eighteen he married Mary Ann Spurway of Pilton, a suburb of Barnstaple, and shortly afterwards they took passage in a sailing ship across the Bristol Channel to seek success in South Wales which was then burgeoning under the Industrial Revolution.

After successful years in Merthyr Tydfil as clerk to a local solicitor, and intensive 'after hours' studies in Book Keeping and Commerce they moved to Swansea where John Francis set up as an Accountant together with the 'ancillary occupations' of Estate Agent, General Auctioneer, Money Lender, Trustee of Insolvencies and what we would these days describe as 'Business Consultant'. His offices, and large auction rooms were at 3, 4 and 5 Goat Street, Swansea where he later had as neighbours Boots Cash Chemists, Giles Phillips (Leather Goods) and the large department store across the road of Ben Evans & Company, now occupied as a public gardens.

Originally the business was conducted by John F as he was known locally, as a sole practitioner but just after the turn of the century he was joined by his two sons, George Henry and Charles Herbert Henry.

In 1880, when the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales was formed under Royal Charter, John F., being already practising as an Accountant and of good repute was granted Fellowship of the new Institute.

It is of interest to record that, having been carrying on all the above mentioned 'ancillary occupations' when the Charter was granted he was allowed to continue such occupations until his retirement; this to the embarrassment of his two sons who had qualified under the Institute's Intermediate and Final Examinations subsequent to the granting of the Charter.

In the middle twenties John F Harvey retired from the practice and the Estate Agency and Auctioning accommodation was no longer required. Thus Charles H Harvey ACA removed the residual accountancy and auditing practice to offices at Central Buildings, Fisher Street, Swansea and took into partnership a Mr Reginald Garlick Thomas who had been admitted to the Institute as an Associate in 1921.

Some three years later the practice was removed across the road to No 11 Fisher Street at which address it remained until 1941/2 when it was destroyed by enemy action.

However, at age 50, Mr Harvey retired from all active participation but remained a partner, leaving his capital in the business to be taken over on qualifying by his nephew (and Mr Thomas articled clerk) Mr Robert John Donald Burnie who was ultimately admitted in 1938 and in the same year enlisted in the Army.

This intention however fell away after the War as Mr Burnie thought it was more suitable to take up an offered senior position with the Dunlop Rubber Company in London SW1 and neither of the intended partners would happily have entered into partnership with the other.

Thus John F Harvey & Sons passed, for all time, out of possession of the Harvey family.

Many audit clients, the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy and the Registrar of the County Court wrote to express regret at this separation.

At the time of the bombing the staff of John F Harvey & Sons consisted of:

R G Thomas ACA	-	Sole Practitioner
R J D Burnie ACA	-	On military service overseas
E G Howells ASAA	-	Audit clerk
Sidney Murphy	-	Audit clerk
George Parry Evans	-	Clerk – joined J F H & Sons in 1910
J Edward Humber	-	Articled to R G Thomas ACA
Iris Jones	-	Typist Clerk

John F Harvey & Sons - The Llanelli Office

John F Harvey's two sons, George and Charles, both Chartered Accountants, were vastly different characters.

Charles, the younger, took his partnership in the firm very seriously and worked long hours. His attitude to clients, especially those small traders who needed support and guidance in business matters was always impeccable. When I joined the firm in 1928 as articled clerk to Mr R G Thomas I well remember a thriving grocer in Ystralyfera saying to me 'Mr Burnie – your uncle Charles always made me and the wife feel as if we were the ONLY clients'.

Not so Uncle George! He was the quintessential Edwardian play boy and Goat Street days saw him more often in the Bodega Lounge in Castle Street chatting up the landlords daughter, Ambrosina, than at work under the stern eye of John F Harvey or legitimately out on audits.

Since John F Harvey & Sons had several substantial audits in Llanelli, George sold his father and brother the idea of opening an office in that town – and, as you may guess – with himself in charge of it freed from parental and brotherly observation.

This worked only as might have been expected. George spent minimum time possible in the office and the maximum he could get away with demonstrating his undoubted skill at billiards in the Stephney Hotel in the towns main street.

Just as John F Harvey and brother Charles were agonizing over how they could close the Llanelli office down without having a nasty family and business rupture, Uncle George solved it for them.

In January 1912 he eloped to South Africa with Ambrosina of The Bodega from which adventure once established in the Goldfields of the Transavaal, he neither looked back nor came back.

I was born in the month of his departure to his favourite sister, Mabel, and because she was on the verge being delivered of the writer, George sent Ambrosina in advance to Southampton while he remained in Swansea to see me safely delivered. He then kissed my mother farewell and patted my still-wet head only then did he join 'Brocie' at the gangway of the mail ship Cape town Castle.

Imagine, if you will, the gentle Ambrosina on the quayside of Southampton, her ties with home and family severed while George is still safely back in Swansea. What – she must have been thinking, if her, mercurial and wayward lover changes his mind?

But George didn't. The fugitives went aboard the ship just as the longshoremen were casting off the last mooring hawser.

Forty years on I asked 'Aunt Brocie' (as she became) “what if Uncle George had not turned up – for one of the many several possible reasons?”

She said very firmly “ I'd got my ticket dear. I'd have gone to South Africa anyway!”

A splendid girl was Ambrosina – even if it did take the family thirty years to acknowledge her existence.

Post 1945

The Firm was transferred into the ownership of Mr Reginald Thomas and his partner Mr Geoffrey Emmanuel.

In 1973 the firm was purchased by Mr David Husband (Father of the current proprietor) with Mr Michael Bevan who left the partnership 2 years later.

Mr Husband continued as the sole practitioner, until he was joined by his son John in 1988, having transferred from the local office of Deloitte, Haskins & Sells upon qualification 2 years earlier.

Upon the retirement of Mr David Husband in 1993, son John continued as sole practitioner and currently employs 10 staff with the firm maintaining and expanding its long-standing agricultural connections in addition to have a client base covering all aspects of modern business.

John F Harvey & Sons

Chronology

Year

- 1846 - 1st April John Francis Harvey born to John and Mary Harvey at Fremington, North Devon. Died, Sketty, Swansea 26th January 1933.
- 1864 (circa) - John F Harvey and wife moved across Bristol Channel to South Wales and took employment with local solicitor at Merthyr Tydfil.
- 1868 (circa) - John F Harvey and wife re-moved to Swansea and set up in practice as Accountant with several ancillary occupations.
- 1880 - John F Harvey admitted as Fellow to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).
- 1990 (circa) - John F Harvey jointed in partnership in John F Harvey & Sons by his two sons, George Henry and Charles Herbert Harvey.
- 1910 - A branch office opened at Cowell Street, Llanelli with George H Harvey in charge.
- 1912 - George H Harvey emigrated to South Africa (Johannesburg) and Llanelli office closed down.
- 1927 (circa) - John F Harvey retired from active participation in all the activities of John F Harvey & Sons and all ancillary activities discontinued. Active partner Charles H Harvey transferred the business to Central Buildings, Fisher Street, Swansea and took into partnership Reginald Garlick Thomas ACA (admitted 1921).
- 1928 - Reginald Thomas took as Articled Clerk Mr Robert John Donald Burnie, the nephew of Charles H Harvey.
- 1930 - Business transferred across Fisher Street to no 11.
- 1930 - Charles H Harvey at the age of 50 retired from active participation and became a sleeping partner.
- 1941/2 - 11 Fisher Street, Swansea was destroyed by enemy action.