

# The Brown Family of Cheltenham – Carvers of the Caryatides of Montpellier Walk

Notes compiled by Brian Torode



Before 1840 the proprietors of the Montpellier Walk had built a row of shops which provided an added incentive for visitors to the Montpellier Spa. Pearson Thompson of Hatherley Court brought from London three terra cotta figures, the Caryatides, which it was decided could be used as pillars outside these shop fronts. The three brought by Thompson were used on the offices of the Cheltenham Looker On at the Promenade end of the Walk, a building which until recently housed the National Westminster Bank but is now a restaurant.

Mr. Brown of 45, Tivoli Street was commissioned to carve the other matching figures, eighteen in all, which he did with his son, William between 1845 and 1850. In 1851 Mr. Brown was living and working from Tivoli Street where he employed six men, one of whom was his son William then aged 23. Mr. James Brown's death in 1871 at the age of 67 is recorded in The Cheltenham Examiner of 12th December:

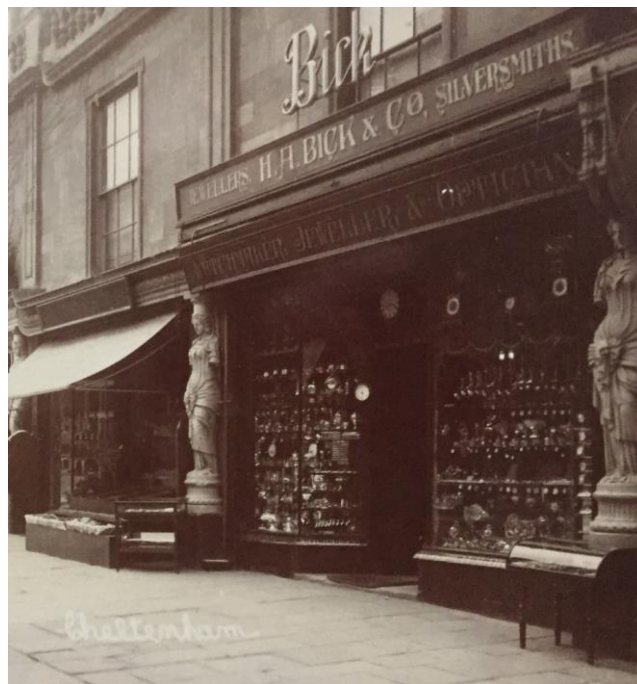
*“A very old tradesman of the town, Mr. Brown, was a builder and sculptor engaged in many of the principal buildings of Cheltenham during the last half century, including Pittville Pump Room, the College, the College Chapel, Christ Church, St Luke's, Salem Chapel, the Congregational Church and the carved work and carved figures in Montpellier Walk. The figures were placed in the shops as they were completed.”*

The CLO for 1913 recorded that only two of the figures were ever removed and that they were then “in existence, in two private gardens”. (66) His son William Giles died at Malvern

House, Malvern Road aged 98 in 1926, “associated with much of the sculptural work of the town, particularly the caryatides in Montpellier Walk.”

A photograph of W G Brown and his father is reproduced in the Cheltenham Chronicle and Graphic for May 15<sup>th</sup> 1926. The accompanying text reads:

*‘Mr William Giles Brown, of Malvern House, Malvern Road, died May 1<sup>st</sup> aged 98. He was associated with much architectural work in this town, especially the Caryatides in Montpellier Walk. He is shown with his father at the building site of the Cambray Turkish Baths. Mr Brown senior died over 50 years ago aged 73. He worked on the Pitville Pump Room when it was under construction and did much work at Christ Church when it was built in 1838. Both father and son worked as sculptors on the Houses of Parliament.’*



Tracing a Brown Family Tree - exploring how 'Joan's Family' might fit into the 'Caryatides Family' - researched by Brian Torode, August 2003

POSSIBLE BROWN FAMILY TREE

William Brown  
 m 2nd Aug 1802,  
 Susanna Hooper, Painswick.

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James Brown b 17 July 1803 bpt 17 July 1803 (Painswick) died 5.12.1871 m Margaret	Charles William bpt 6.4.1806	Samuel bpt 8.5.08	William** bpt 11.2.10 died 7.2.86 m 3.9.1837	John bpt 3.5.12
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Mary Ann Smith  
 b. 3.9.17  
 d.8.11.59

Sarah b 1827 Dressmaker d. 12.06.1913 at 87	William b 1828 mason d. 30.04.1926 aet 98	Susan b 1829 dressmaker
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Catherine b.22.6.39	William Henry* b.12.10.41	Charles Benoni b 25.12.43	Jane Susan b. 14.6.46 d.26.10.48	Mark Alfred b.25.4.49	John James b.23.10.51 d.4.5.54	Frank Albert b.2.4.55	John Herbin b.31.8.58
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\*\* 1851 Census:

6, Lower Barton Street, Gloucester.

William Brown, aged 41 b Painswick, MUSICIAN

Mary Ann 51 b Kislingbury Nths

Catherine 11 b Cheltenham

William Henry 9 b Gloucester (?)

Charles Benoni 7 b Gloucester (?)

Mark A 1 b Gloucester (?) (?) appears like this on Census.

This could mean in 1840 they were living in Cheltenham but by 1842 had moved to Gloucester.

\*William Henry, 1881 Census:

6, Providence Square Gloucester

aged 39

House Painter, born Gloucester City

Married to Louise.

## The Brown Saga, Part One

Sources:

### 1. Grave stone (really a small square, pillar) at Cheltenham Cemetery:

In memory of **Sara Bucknell Brown**, daughter of the late James Brown, Builder, who carved the figures on Montpellier Walk for the late Pearson Thompson esq. She **died June 12<sup>th</sup> 1913 aged 87 years.**

On the other face of the stone,  
In sweet memory of **William Giles Brown, Sculptor, aged 98 years.**  
**Born Cheltenham 1828**  
**Died Cheltenham 1926**

Anchored at last in the desired Haven.

On the third face of the pillar is

**William Giles Brown.**

And now the shore is reached at last, who will count the billows past. **1828 – 1926**

.....

### 2. Cheltenham Examiner 13<sup>th</sup> December 1871.

Death of an old tradesman:

In our obituary this week we recall the death of a very old tradesman of the town, **Mr James Brown, builder and sculptor of Malvern Road.** He was engaged in the **erection or ornamentation** of most of the principal buildings erected during the last half century, including Pitville Pump Room, the College and college Chapel, Christ Church, St Luke's Church, Salem Chapel, the Congregational Church **and the carved work and carved figures in Montpellier.**

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### 3. Cheltenham Looker On 22.3.1913

**There have been recent alterations to Montpellier Walk. Three of the statues have disappeared over 30 years ago, when 3 were moved to increase the width of a shop window.**

**Caryatides:** The first ones erected in Montpellier Walk were on the block of buildings at the Promenade end, which includes the Cheltenham Looker On Office. These statues were purchased by Mr Pearson Thompson in London and **between 1845 and 1850 eighteen**

others were worked by a clever Cheltenham sculptor, Mr James Brown and his son, 9 another son is still resident in the town) and placed in other shops as they were built. Two only have been removed in all these years and these, many years ago. They are still in existence in two private gardens.

**4. Cheltenham Looker On 1 July 1916**

An article on the Development of Cheltenham in the early nineteenth century, very ably written, appears in the Town Planning Review, the Journal of the Dept of Civic Design, School of Architecture at University of Liverpool. It deals with the development of Cheltenham from the point of view of an architect and I extract the following dealing with Montpellier Walk:

“Having designed and erected the Rotunda, Papworth proceeded with Montpellier Walk, a terrace of shops with terra cotta Caryatides by Rossi.....(The article goes on to give the history of the original caryatides at Athens.) Mr Richardson, the author of the Liverpool article **is not totally correct in saying the statues are by Rossi. Three certainly are and** these were brought from London by Pearson Thompson who developed the Montpellier Estate. **They were taken as the model for the remainder which were sculptured in stone by the late Mr WG Brown at 45 Tivoli Street. His son who assisted in the work** still resides in Malvern Road.

.....

**5. Gloucestershire Echo. 1 May 1926**

Mr **William Giles Brown** has passed peacefully away at **Malvern House, Malvern Road, Cheltenham at the age of 98**. He was born in Cheltenham and was **associated with much of the sculptured work of the town, particularly the Caryatides**, (armless ladies) in Montpellier Walk. The funeral will take place on Wednesday next, the first part of the service being at Cambray Baptist Chapel at 3 pm.(The announcement of his death says “died 30<sup>th</sup> April”

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**6. Cheltenham Chronicle 8<sup>th</sup> May 1926.**

**Funeral Report of Mr W G Brown of Cheltenham.**

Mr William Giles Brown has passed peacefully away at Malvern House, Cheltenham aged 98. He was born in Cheltenham and was associated with much of the sculptured work in the town, particularly the Caryatides in Montpellier Walk.

Legacies ...

Funeral service at Cambray ... reference made to the long and laboured life and the useful service rendered by the deceased. ... There were **few relatives present**, the general strike rendering it impossible for them to reach Cheltenham and many apologies were received by telegram and letter, including **Mr “Jim” Brown** from London.

List of **mourners** included a Violette Brown, youngest daughter of Capt and Mrs Walter Brown, but **no mention is made of any of their relationships to the deceased**

.....

If anything this confuses things even more, especially the items No 4 and 6. I will have a look at Poll Books and Census perhaps tomorrow but it certainly seems that W.G. Brown did work on the Caryatides.

Also, if William was born 1828, he'd be 23, by 1851 and is probably the son William whom I mention in my Tivoli book. The Mr Brown, his father, employing six men (1851 Census) would therefore have been the James who died in 1871. The Cheltenham Cemetery Register has James Brown, buried 5<sup>th</sup> December 1871 of Malvern House, Malvern Road, aged 68. He is buried with his wife Margaret. He would therefore have been born in 1803 which would fit in nicely with the birth of William in 1828.

I'll try to find the grave tomorrow and also check the 1871 Examiner again, as I looked after 13<sup>th</sup> December, which is the date when the little article (2 above) is given, but if he was buried 5<sup>th</sup> The

## Brown Saga, Part Two:

I'm beginning to think that your Joan's family were nothing to do with the Caryatides at all...

Census details today:

1841 Tivoli Street – no house numbers given, but only one Brown family:

James Brown	Head	married	aged 35	born in County
William			13	
Margaret			40	
Susan			12	

1851 Census – only one Brown family in Tivoli Street:

James Brown	Head	married	aged 47	Mason, employing six men	Born County Painswick
Margaret	wife	married	aged 51		born Brerwood STS
Sarah	dtr	unmarried	aged 24	Dressmaker	born Cheltenham
William	son	unmarried	aged 23	Mason	born Cheltenham
Susan	dtr	unmarried	aged 22	Dressmaker	born Cheltenham

1871 Census: Malvern House, Malvern Road E District 32, p74+

James Brown	Head	widower	67	Builder	born Painswick
Sara B Brown	dtr	unmarried	44	Dressmaker	Cheltenham
William G Brown	Son	unmarried	43	Stone carver	Cheltenham
Susan	dtr	unmarried	42	Dressmaker	Cheltenham
George John Roe	visitor		5		Coventry

1891 Census Malvern House Malvern Road:

William G Brown	Head	single	63	retired mason	Cheltenham
Sara Brown	sister	single	62	retired dressmaker	Cheltenham

(The William Brown on your Joan's list who died 7.2.1886 aged 76 lived at 92, Albion Street.)

I also sought out the grave of James Brown of Tivoli Street who died at Malvern House in 1871 aged 68, but the grave is unmarked – however right behind his daughter's Sara Bucknell Brown and William Giles Brown. Also in his grave is his wife Margaret.

The Looker On article of 22.3.1913 contains another piece which I found today in addition to the one I sent yesterday:

'To the many great discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century another has recently been added locally, which we feel requires even more extended prominence than it can obtain in the columns of the Cheltenham Chronicle. There our contemporary wrote a fortnight ago:

I noticed the other day that two or three of the armless women that have patiently stood on guard so many years over each one of the shops facing Montpellier Gardens have disappeared as the result, I believe of recent alterations.

The writer thinks this unkind action is uncalled for and considers as we do that Montpellier Walk is the handsomest row in the town and a distinctive landmark that ought to be preserved. The removal of an armless woman may serve the utilitarian object of widening the width of the shop window he remarked, and plaintively enquired is utility everything even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? .... The article goes on to say that the writer of the Chronicle article must be very unobservant because it is well over thirty years since the removal of the figures which he deplors took place.

The article then continues with the history of the Caryatides which I summarised yesterday but I did not give you the full last three lines:

Eighteen others were worked by a clever Cheltenham sculptor Mr Brown (**it does not say J Brown**) and his son - (another son by the way is still resident in the town) – and were duly placed as other shops were built. Two only have been removed in all these years and these, as we have stated, many years ago. They are still in existence in two private gardens.

(The reference to another son is probably not correct as no other boy Browns appear in the Census for this family – unless he was born early in the marriage and had left home by 1841. This could not possibly have been your Joan's William who was born in 1809.

NOW FOR THE ANNUAIRES/ POST OFFICE DIRECTORIES/ TRADES DIRECTORIES

1850 Trades Directory: no Browns under builders, nor under carvers, nor under sculptors nor under tradesmen

1850 Annuaire: no Browns under tradesmen. No Malvern House listed. No Tivoli Street houses listed.

1860 Annuaire: No Brown sculptors, builders, carvers or gilders no Brown's under tradespeople.

1870 Annuaire: No Browns under builders, no Tivoli Street houses listed, no Malvern House listed.

1870-71 Royal Directory: Tivoli Street listed with residents from 1-51 but no Browns. No Malvern House yet.

1880 PO Directory: No Browns in Tivoli Street, no Browns as sculptors or builders.

BUT **Malvern Cottage**, Malvern Road, occupied by Mr W G Brown. (He obviously 'upmarketed' it to **House**)

Family Tree would look like this:

James Brown m Margaret		
b about 1804      about 1800		
Sarah	William	Susan
1827	1828	1829
d12.6.1913	d 30.4.1926	d ?

Details appear on the gravestone for Sarah which I sent you yesterday.

Joan's Family:

William Brown mar 3.9.1837 Mary Ann Smith	
b. 17.10.1809	b. 3.9.1817
d. 7.2.1886	d. 8.11.1859

First child Catherine born 1839, last child John Herbin born 1858.

(This William could have been James' brother. I am on Cathedral duty tomorrow and if I get away before five I'll pop into Record Office and look at the birth registers to see if William and James had same parents.

December, I'll need to look earlier for the actual obituary and perhaps a funeral report.



## W.G. Brown – Final Instalment

GRO Parish registers on microfiche

### Painswick:

James Brown baptised 17<sup>th</sup> July 1803, son of William and Susanna Brown.

Charles William Brown baptised 6<sup>th</sup> April 1806 son of ditto

Samuel Brown baptised 8<sup>th</sup> May 1808 son of ditto

William Brown baptised 11<sup>th</sup> February 1810 son of ditto (Joan says born 17.10.1809)

John Brown baptised 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1812 son of ditto

1870 Kelly gives a James Brown, builder, Christ Church (ie Malvern Road?)

1879 Kelly gives William Giles Brown, Malvern House Malvern Road under Private Residences, but he is not there in 1876.

I think this clinches the feeling that:

James Brown of Tivoli was given the contract for the carving of the caryatides by Pearson Thompson. After all, he lived only just half a mile if that, away from him, in Hatherley Court. James son, also a carver in his dad's business, probably took over the actual work after his dad had done the first few, and carried on with them, becoming known locally as "The carver of the caryatides."

Perhaps through this contract they made their money and moved to a better area – Malvern Road – in late 1860s or 1870, where James died in 1871. W.G. therefore continued the firm from that address. The 1913 Looker On reference to 'another son resident in the town' actually refers to W.G. as I can't find any other children of James apart from then ones I have already sent you, although judging from the attenders at W.G.'s funeral there were lots of Browns there or who sent apologies and they must have been nephews, nieces, cousins etc. Also, I haven't searched to find any marriage or children of W.G. Brown, but I feel in my water that he was unmarried – otherwise his wife would have been mentioned somewhere in an article or on the gravestone.

The Looker On 1916 report which talks of the late Mr W.G. Brown really should say James Brown, and the article **should read**: "Three of the figures were brought from London by the late Mr Pearson Thompson, who developed the Montpellier Estate. They were taken as models for the remainder which were sculpted in stone **by the late Mr Brown in Tivoli and his son, Mr WG Brown who still resides in Malvern Road, assisted him.**"

My feeling is that the Examiner of 1871 report of James' death suggests that James, the builder, actually did the erection and setting into place of most of the statues which he had delegated to his son W G to carve, having done the first few himself.

W.G.'s death report in 1926, which would have been the most accurate considering how well known he was and how involved with the life of the town especially the Baptist Church, clearly says he was associated with much of the sculptured work of the town, **especially the Caryatides in Montpellier.**

However, this does not include **William**, unless of course, he worked with his brother James, as one of his team. His marriage certificate might give his occupation, - I haven't looked yet – but as far as the Painswick couple, William and Susanna are concerned, I couldn't find their marriage in Painswick Registers so they may have got married before coming to Painswick.

Have now found the marriage – at Painswick, I must have been distracted yesterday.

William Brown, resident of this parish, and Susanna Hooper of this parish, married by Banns in this Church 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1802. John Fearon, Vicar. Witnesses William Ravenshill and James Sheppard.

Therefore, it would seem that as James was born July 1803 he was undoubtedly the first child.

The children of James and Margaret, W.G.'s parents, were not baptised at Cheltenham St Mary which would have been the only place at the time, unless they were baptised when older, or in view of W.G.'s Baptist Church connections, perhaps they weren't baptised at all but dedicated at the Baptist Chapel or some other non conformist place of worship.

I did find a William H Brown in 1881 Census, aged 39 living at 6, Providence Square Chelt. who was born in Gloucester City, and was married to a Louise and he was a house painter. This would appear to be the William Henry born 12.10.1841 on Joan's list.

Will this do? I haven't got a lot of time next week but could find half a day if I really had to!

Back of Steve Blake's photo of William "Monkey" Brown:

William Brown b 1809

Son William Henry born 1841

Son William born 1870

Son William George Henry b 1894

Son William Phillip Brown b 1921