

James' Great Adventure

The true story of James Barnes



James' Great Adventure

*The true story of a Lake District farm boy who
crossed the world and became a country
policeman*

*A true story. Every important thing in this book really happened.
Where we could not be sure, we kept it gentle and simple, and we
never invented facts.*

1 • A Boy Who Studied Maps

More than a hundred and fifty years ago, a boy named James Barnes grew up on a farm in the north of England. It was called Garnett House, tucked among the green hills and grey stone walls of the Lake District. The house was astonishingly old - parts of it had stood for five hundred years, built around a small stone tower.

Every morning before school, James helped drive the cattle into the shed, his boots crunching on the frozen ground. His family had farmed this same corner of the hills for generations. It was a good life, and a settled one.

But James was not really thinking about cattle. He was thinking about maps. At school he would trace the faraway countries with his finger and dream. Somewhere out past the hills and the sea were places he could not stop imagining.



ENGLAND,
31 MARCH 1854: JAMES BARNES
IS BORN AT GARNETT HOUSE.

ONE DAY I'LL SEE
WHAT LIES *PAST*
THOSE HILLS.

THE FARMHOUSE IS
OVER 500 YEARS OLD,
WALLS FOUR FEET THICK.



AT SCHOOL, MAPS OPEN
DOORS THAT NO TRACK
THROUGH THE FELS
COULD REACH.

2 • The Whole Wide World

At school one day, James unrolled a map of the whole world. He found lands scattered far across the oceans - Australia, New Zealand, places so distant they seemed almost impossible to reach.

The 1870s were an exciting time to be young. New steamships were beginning to shrink the great oceans. Faraway colonies were calling for people to come and start new lives, and ships left the ports of northern England almost every week.

James made up his mind. He would not stay a farmer like his father and grandfather before him. He would board one of those ships and go and see the world for himself.

The 1870s:
faster steamships
were shrinking
the oceans.

More than half of
migrants got help
to pay their fare.

Australia...
New Zealand...
I'm going to see
them all.



3 • Across the Sea

So James said his goodbyes and sailed away from everything he knew. The voyage to the far side of the world took many long weeks, out across huge and empty seas. James was not frightened. He was thrilled.

He came first to New Zealand, where he spent his time, as he later said, 'travelling about the country' - walking, looking, and learning. Then he sailed on again across the Tasman Sea.

In 1876 he stepped ashore in the bright, busy harbour city of Sydney, from a ship named the Hero. He was about as far from a quiet Cumbrian farm as a young man could possibly be.

1876:

James lands at Sydney
on a ship named *Hero*.

He wandered New Zealand
first, 'travelling about
the country.'

So this is the
other side of the
world.



A busy harbour city in a land
beyond every map he had studied.

4 • The Policeman's Coat

In Australia, James found work that suited a strong, steady young man. In 1880 he joined the New South Wales Police, pulled on the blue uniform, and was sent up-country almost at once - to a place called Temora, where gold had just been discovered.

Temora was chaos. In only a few weeks, around twenty thousand hopeful diggers had rushed in from every direction. They threw up a 'bark town' of tents and huts half a mile long, on a dry, dusty plain that never had enough water.

Into all that noise and dust walked one brand-new constable with a baton, to keep the peace among thousands of fortune-hunters. It was hot, hard, thankless work - but James did it.

1880:
JAMES JOINS THE
NEW SOUTH WALES
POLICE.

TEMORA, 1880:
ABOUT 20,000
PEOPLE RUSHED IN
FOR GOLD.

A WHOLE
'BARK TOWN'
SPRANG UP
ALMOST
OVERNIGHT.



So this is Temora...
I'll do my duty
and keep the
peace.



5 • A Piece of Gold

On his rest days, James quietly worked a small claim of his own. One evening, deep in a dry creekbed, his boot turned something loose in the gravel. He bent, picked it up, and rubbed off the dirt. Under the mud was a dull gleam of yellow.

He washed it slowly in a puddle of muddy water. It was gold - a real nugget. It was not a fortune, but it was enough. Enough to be a reason. Enough to be a door.

And the moment he held it, James knew exactly what he wanted. Not to be rich - but to go home, to walk back up the lane to Garnett House and show his family how far he had come.

April 1882:
James strikes
'a good find'
of gold.

He called his
restless feeling
the 'restless
fever.'

This is
my ticket
home!



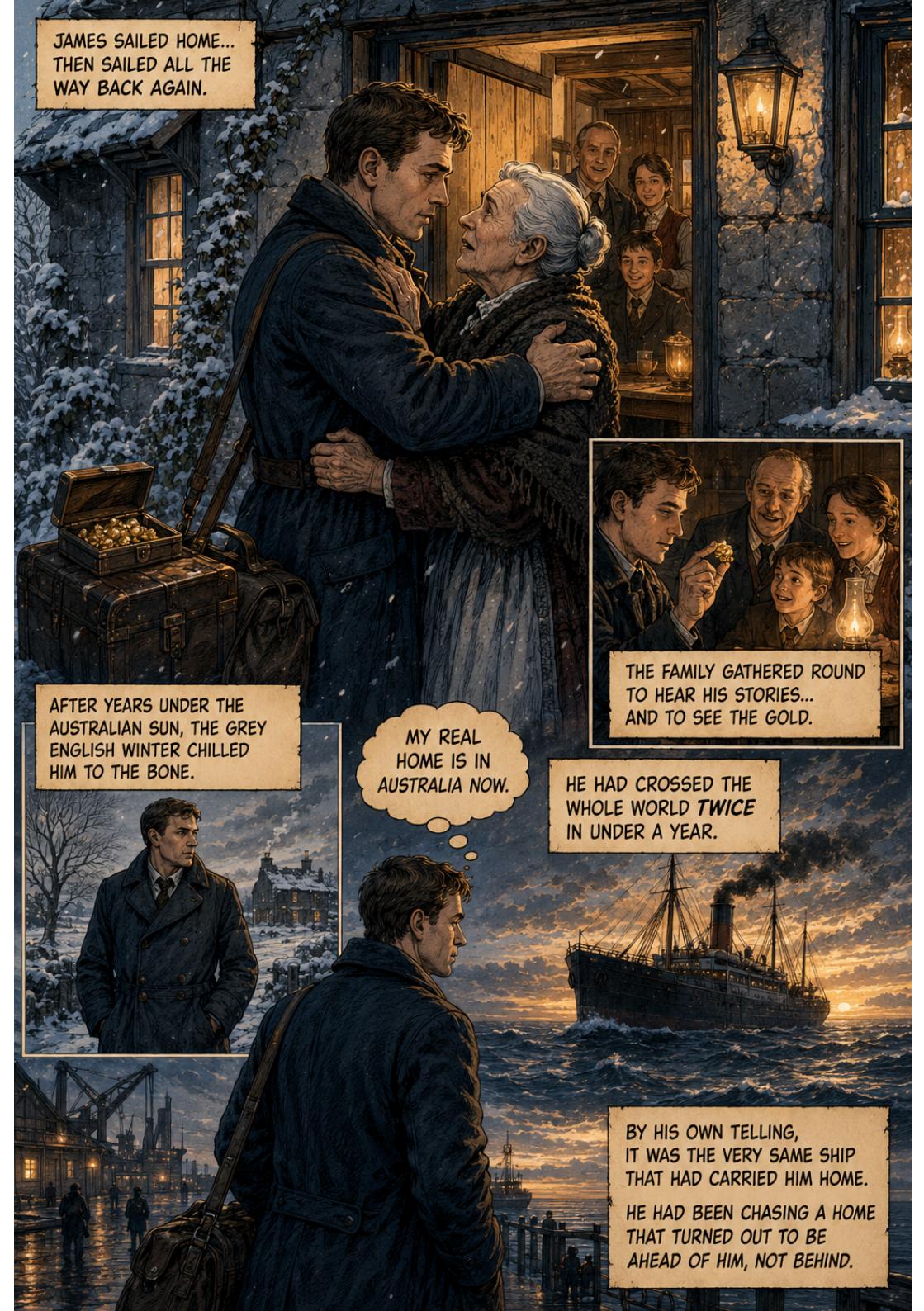
Not to be rich – but to go home, to walk back up the lane to Garnett House
and show his family how far he had come.

6 • Too Cold for Home

James drew his gold, boarded a ship, and sailed all the way back to England. His mother could hardly believe the well-dressed traveller at her door was her own son. The family gathered round to hear his stories, and he proudly showed them the gold.

But something had changed - and it was James. After years under the hot Australian sun, the grey English winter chilled him to the bone. Worse, the quiet farm life no longer fitted the man he had become.

Within months he was back on a ship heading south again. By his own telling, it was the very same ship that had carried him home. He had now crossed the entire world twice in under a year. He had been chasing a home that turned out to be ahead of him, not behind.



JAMES SAILED HOME...
THEN SAILED ALL THE
WAY BACK AGAIN.

AFTER YEARS UNDER THE
AUSTRALIAN SUN, THE GREY
ENGLISH WINTER CHILLED
HIM TO THE BONE.

MY REAL
HOME IS IN
AUSTRALIA NOW.

THE FAMILY GATHERED ROUND
TO HEAR HIS STORIES...
AND TO SEE THE GOLD.

HE HAD CROSSED THE
WHOLE WORLD **TWICE**
IN UNDER A YEAR.

BY HIS OWN TELLING,
IT WAS THE VERY SAME SHIP
THAT HAD CARRIED HIM HOME.
HE HAD BEEN CHASING A HOME
THAT TURNED OUT TO BE
AHEAD OF HIM, NOT BEHIND.

7 • The Big Gentle Constable

For the next thirty years, James was a country policeman, moving from town to town across the wide back country of New South Wales. He was a giant of a man - six feet three inches tall and around eighteen stone - and people said there was 'not a finer built man in the district.'

But for all his size, he was famously gentle and kind. A country constable had to do a dozen jobs at once. He rode long, lonely patrols and ran a one-man station. He even escorted coaches of prisoners hundreds of miles across the empty plains.

Some of the places he served were rough frontier towns, with tin-shed lock-ups and hard living. Through all of it, James kept the peace quietly, and let his steady, patient work speak for him.

6 FT 3 IN • ABOUT 18 STONE
A GIANT AMONG
COUNTRY POLICEMEN.

"NOT A FINER
BUILT MAN IN
THE DISTRICT."

A quiet word
is often stronger
than a loud one.

A COUNTRY CONSTABLE
RODE LONELY PATROLS,
RAN THE POLICE STATION,
CARRIED THE MAIL,
SERVED COURT PAPERS,
AND ESCORTED PRISONERS
ACROSS THE BUSH.

MANY JOBS. ONE MAN.

ON PATROL



AT THE STATION



CARRYING THE MAIL



ESCORTING PRISONERS



THROUGH ROUGH TOWNS AND ENDLESS MILES,
HE KEPT THE PEACE WITH PATIENCE, FAIRNESS, AND A KIND HEART.

8 • A Girl of the Goldfields

Far away, on the goldfields of Victoria, a girl named Emily Borrman was growing up. She was born near Bendigo in 1864, into a large, hard-working family that had come from two very different worlds.

Her father was a miller's son from Silesia, in Germany. He had sailed halfway round the world to dig for gold. Her mother had come out from England as a young woman. They were poor, devout, and orderly.

On Sundays, Emily walked with her family to a small timber chapel among the mine-heads. The hymns were often sung in German, led by the older voices. Emily did not know all the words, so she hummed the tunes she loved and smiled.

12 November 1864:
Emily Borrmann is born
near Bendigo.

Her father came
all the way from
Silesia, in Germany.

The hymns were
often sung half
in German.



The tunes
stayed with me,
even when the
words didn't.

9 • By the River

When Emily grew up, she went looking for work, as many goldfields girls did. It took her a long way north to the bustling river port of Wentworth, where the Murray and Darling rivers meet, and where her brother ran a business.

Wentworth was Australia's busiest inland port. Paddle-steamers crowded the wharves. Bullock teams hauled wool down to the water. And walking the streets of that town, in his blue uniform, was a tall, friendly constable named James Barnes.

They met, and talked, and laughed, and liked each other at once. Not long after, on 21 October 1891, James and Emily were married in St John's Church, right there by the river.

21 October 1891:
James and Emily marry
at St John's Church.

Wentworth was
Australia's busiest
inland river port.

Fancy meeting
a Cumbrian
policeman
way out here!

St John's Church
stood right there
by the river,
witness to many
happy beginnings.



10 • A House Full of Children

James and Emily built a warm and busy home together. Before long it was full of children: first Constance, then their only son Cecil, then Freda, and finally the twin girls, Myrtle and Ivy.

For such a huge man, James was wonderfully gentle with the little ones. He was strict about good manners and neat work, but the children adored their kind, giant father.

The family moved wherever the police sent him, packing up the whole house every few years to follow him to the next town. Wherever they went, there was always noise, and work, and love.

A detailed illustration of a family in a Victorian-style home. A man in a dark blue police uniform with the number '4341' on his collar sits at a wooden table. He has a mustache and is looking down at his children. Seated around the table are five children: a girl in a blue dress on the left, a boy in a striped shirt and suspenders next to her, a girl in a red dress in the center, and two girls in white dresses with blue bows on the right. A woman in a white high-collared dress sits behind the children on the right. The room is dimly lit by a large oil lamp on the table and a window lamp in the background. A small framed photo of a family is on the wall.

Their children:
Constance, Cecil,
Freda, and
twins Myrtle & Ivy.

A policeman's family
packed up and
moved every
few years.

A busy, happy,
sometimes noisy
house.



11 • The Quietest Place

At last, in 1906, James came to a quiet little village called Kelso, just across the river from the old town of Bathurst. After a lifetime in wild places, it was the calmest beat he had ever known. The local jail, people joked, had 'stood idle for ten years.'

One frosty morning, two nuns from the convent across the road knocked at his door, shivering and wringing their hands. The night before, James had locked up the town's drunken woodcutter - and now the sisters had no one to bring them their firewood.

'We are fairly perishing over there,' the elder nun said, her teeth chattering. James looked at the two blue-cold nuns, then thought of the snoring man in the cell. It was not a hard choice. He let the woodcutter out to fetch their wood.

Kelso's little jail
had 'stood idle
for ten years.'

We're fairly
perishing over
here!

KELSO
POLICE
STATION

The kind constable let
the woodcutter out to help.

A little firewood.
A big kindness.
That's how Kelso
remembered him.



12 • Homework and Rabbits

James wrote with a fine, careful hand, and his daughter Ivy remembered him as a 'mighty pen man.' He checked the children's homework at the kitchen table, and if it was untidy, they had to do it all again, neatly.

One day, home from shooting, James told his son Cecil to clean and gut a brace of rabbits. Cecil cheekily answered back, 'Do it yourself!'

For his cheek, James popped the boy into one of the little Kelso cells to think it over. But Cecil's arms were just long enough to reach out through the bars and unlock the door himself. The family laughed about it for years afterwards.

Ivy remembered her dad
as a 'mighty pen man.'

KELSO
POLICE
STATION

Discipline
Keeps the
Peace

(thought, Cecil)
Do it yourself!

The family laughed
about the cells
for years.



13 • Missing Emily

For much of their marriage, Emily had not been well. She carried a wasting illness for many years, growing slowly more tired. Her younger sister came to live with the family and help nurse her and mind the children.

Everyone loved Emily dearly, and James and her sister cared for her together, side by side, for a long time. But there was no cure for her illness.

In 1908, at the quiet police residence in Kelso, Emily died. She was laid to rest in the peaceful churchyard nearby, under the trees. James missed the goldfields girl he had met by the river, and he never forgot her.

A detailed illustration of a family in Victorian mourning attire gathered at a gravesite. The father, a man with a mustache wearing a top hat and a dark suit, stands in the center with his hands on the shoulders of two children. To his right, the mother, wearing a black hat and a high-collared dress, stands with her hand on the shoulder of another child. In the foreground, a young boy and a young girl are looking down at a grave. The grave is marked by a stone headstone and is adorned with a large bouquet of white lilies and other flowers. In the background, a church with a tall steeple is visible under a warm, sunset sky. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

Emily had been
unwell for many years.

Her sister came to
live with them and help.

EMILY KEZIAH
BARNES
12.11.1864 - 1908
AT REST

1908: Emily is laid to rest
at Kelso.

Loved, and
never forgotten.

14 • This Is Heaven

James served as a policeman for thirty-four years in all. When at last it was time to retire, his fellow officers gathered to thank him. They gave him three silver-mounted pipes and a walking stick, and - a man of few words - he told them the whole tale of his stirring life.

Not long after, one evening in 1914, James came home from a long journey, very tired. He pulled off his boots and lowered himself into his big, soft easy chair by the fire, and leaned his head back.

His last words, his youngest daughter always remembered, were just three: 'This is heaven.' And with that he fell peacefully asleep. He was laid to rest beside his Emily, in the one grave at Kelso, together forever.

31 MARCH 1914:
JAMES RETIRES AFTER
34 YEARS IN UNIFORM.

HIS FRIENDS GAVE
HIM THREE SILVER-
MOUNTED PIPES.

THIS
IS HEAVEN.

JAMES BARNES
1854 - 1914

EMILY K. BARNES
1864 - 1908

LAI D TO REST
BESIDE EMILY



Meet James Barnes and Emily Borrman: a farm boy who loved maps, sailed across the whole world twice, and became the biggest, kindest policeman in town; and Emily, a German engineer's daughter brought up on the Bendigo goldfields. This is their story - from the green hills in England to the goldfields of Australia, and a little house full of children. Every important thing in this book really happened.