

## George Prest Fairburn

**(b.1870, d. 1913)**

George Prest Fairburn was born in Wortley, Leeds in 1870 and was baptised on 11 August 1870 at St Matthew Holbeck and St John the Baptist New Wortley (1,2). His parents were George and Isabella Fairburn. They were not from Leeds themselves; George was born in Wath or Melmerby, near Ripon and Isabella's family, (surname "Prest"), came from Dishforth (3).

The 1871 census shows the family (named as "Fairbourne") living in Wortley, at 16 Pickards Buildings, Hoyle Street, and as well as his parents, George had a brother, Thomas William aged 5, and a sister Mary Isabell aged 3 (4). His father was working as a railway stoker.

Ten years later, everything in George's life had changed. The 1881 census shows him as an inmate in the Ripon Workhouse, together with his sister Mary (5). It turns out that his mother Isabella died in 1874 (6), and in 1875 his brother Thomas was committed to a reformatory for stealing. The West Yorkshire Reformatory School Records reveal that the family had been split up after Isabella's death. George and the boys had gone to live with a relative, Jane Wilburn, who lived in New Wortley, and Mary and her younger sister Kate (born in 1873) had probably been sent to Ripon into the care of her aunt Mary Nicholson (7). Something else must have occurred to require George to be sent away from his father, and possibly aunt Mary could not care for all the children.

Mary left Ripon Workhouse in May 1883 to go into domestic service (8), and George was left on his own. In April 1884, he discharged himself "on his own notice" to obtain work (9). The 1891 census shows him working as a servant at the White Bear Hotel, Silver Street, Masham (10). During the next 10 years, his life changed again, perhaps for the better. He was married in November 1897 to Annie Louisa Allanson in Kirklington (11), and in 1901 they were living in Silver Street, Masham, at Quakers Terrace, with their sons Harold, aged 3, and Ernest, aged 8 months. George is working as a labourer (12).

The 1911 census reveals that he has moved again, to Bishop Middleham, Ferry Hill, Co. Durham, and is working as a "horseman on farm" (13). He is there with his wife, sons Harold and Ernest, and a young son Albert Edward, aged 2. This census also asks for information on other children, and the record shows that in 14 years of marriage, Annie gave birth to 7 live children, but only 3 had survived.

George's story comes to an early end in 1913. He had left the farm and had gone to work as a labourer at Tursdale colliery. The family had moved again to Clarence Villa Cottages, Coxhoe. One very hot day in early August 1913, he was at work at the colliery, and went over to talk to a workmate named Christopher Bell. Bell reports that "he staggered a few feet and fell forward onto his face." Bell thought he had fainted in the heat, immediately loosed his collar and applied water, but George had died. As the death was sudden and unexpected, an inquest was held. The coroner produced a letter from a Dr Hunter of Sedgfield who had

examined George the previous December, and found him to be suffering from “a heart disease of a permanent character resulting from rheumatic fever”. The coroner declared that George had died from heart failure brought on by excessive heat (14, 15).

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