

# Hilmarton

## SAD DEATH OF THE REV. ROBERT W. FAIRBANK.

The Rev. Robert W. Fairbank, who during the illness of the vicar, had been in charge of the parish of Hilmarton, was on Saturday (Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>) seized with a sudden attack of illness and died on the following Thursday (27<sup>th</sup>) morning to the great grief of all those to whom he had ministered for the last twelve months.

It seems that Mrs. Watson the person with whom Mr. Fairbank Lodged, went to call him as usual just before eight o'clock on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and receiving no reply she knocked louder and was alarmed at hearing groans. The blacksmith (Mr. R Stevens) was quickly summoned and having forced the door open the Rev. Gentleman was found lying full length on the floor, with his head away from the bed and close to the bath.

Mr. Smith, the schoolmaster, arrived immediately after, and the sufferer was quickly placed on the bed. A glance was sufficient to show that the whole of the right side of the body was paralysed. Mr Smith at once sent a message to the vicarage, and Mr. J. Musty was dispatched on horseback by Mrs. Goddard for medical aid.

Dr. E.S. Newton-Clare was quickly in attendance and deemed it advisable to telegraph for Miss Fairbank. The patient had recovered consciousness when found, and was able to speak in mono-syllables later on, but his mental anxiety and sufferings were piteous to behold. Just before nine o'clock in the evening he became dreadfully convulsed, and from this time never spoke again. His only sister arrived shortly after, but it was only by the expressive eyes it became evident on the Monday following, that he recognized her presence. Convulsive fits followed throughout the ensuing days, the intervals between each becoming less and less and the contortions of face and limbs weaker and weaker until death closed the eyes as in a peaceful slumber at 2am on Thursday.

The attendant facts in connection with this sudden short, fatal illness, produced by apoplexy render the whole story a particularly sad one. Our readers will remember it was about this time last year we announced the fact that the Rev Canon Goddard's ill-health, necessitated his removal from Hilmarton to South Devon for the winter months, and also that the Rev. W. Fairbank had taken charge of the parish during the absence of its vicar. On return of the vicar, Last spring, Mr. Fairbank, to the pleasure of all, had, at the request of Canon Goddard, agreed to remain as permanent curate of Hilmarton.

As time wore on his own medical adviser and personal friend informed him that the winter in Hilmarton would not suit him, as he had never thoroughly recovered from an attack of pleurisy of a few years back. It was consequently arranged that he should leave Hilmarton at the expiration of his year's ministry. He had bidden farewell to the parishioners in the outlying districts of the parish, had arranged for a farewell service at the Church with a celebration of the Holy Communion, which was to have taken place on the Sunday immediately following the fateful Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The new curate, the Rev. Quartus Bacon, was to arrive on Thursday, when the curate in charge was to give the new comer's hands the care of the parish. Mr. Bacon arrived on the day named, but only to find that he who was to have met him and introduced him to the parish had died that same morning. This same sad day on which the Rev. Canon Goddard was to leave, once more, for the winter months', owing to his long standing illness.

One can easily imagine the grief and shock it was to him (Canon Goddard) to go, amid such gloom and the difficulty it was for those nearest and dearest to him to get him to consent to leave, it being most necessary in his present lamented state of health that he should be removed from so much trouble and. His grief at the loss of one to whom he had become most attached will only be known to those who know him intimately. Mrs. Goddard was most assiduous in her kindly attendance to Mr. Fairbank in his last illness notwithstanding her own husband's indisposition.

Preparations had been made to give Mr. Fairbank a loving welcome home at Wimborne, Miss Fairbank having received a letter from him full of bright thoughts for the future and their coming re-union only a few hours before the telegram summoning her to Hilmarton was delivered to her.

He had been feeling poorly for the last few weeks, which the parting with friends here accentuated, but gave no signs of such a serious issue. He had conducted a funeral service in the afternoon of the previous day (Friday). The whole parish has been deeply affected by the sad event and one and all have expressed their deepest sympathy for the bereaved sister.

The Rev. F.H. DuBoulay, vicar of Heddington, kindly filled the vacancy thus suddenly caused by conducting the service in the morning of the Sunday immediately following the attack, and the Rev. V. F. Ransome officiated in the evening. On Sunday last the service was in every way suited to the sad occasion, the preacher, the Rev. Q. Bacon, delivering most appropriate and eloquent sermons. The Rev. V. F. Ransome assisted at the evening service.

The whole arrangements for the funeral were committed to Mr. F.J. Newman, of Wimborne and were suitably carried out. Mr. Newman visited Hilmarton on Thursday evening, having been summoned by telegraph. Having instructed Mr. T. Rummig to prepare the coffin and all things necessary he returned the same night to arrange for the interment. The coffin was a paneled one of polished English oak with massive brass mounts. On the lid at the head was a cross bearing the letters I.H.S. In the center the plate bore the inscription, "Robert William Fairbank, born June 1<sup>st</sup> 1839, died Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 1890". At the foot was a large star of eight points bearing the letters I.N.R.I. The brass work was beautifully engraved with a most chaste pattern. The whole was superbly finished. The corpse left the village at eight o'clock on Tuesday morning and was driven direct to Chippenham station. Miss Fairbank and her attendant, a trained nurse from the excellent Institution in Salisbury, who had been most unremitting in the discharge of her arduous duties, followed shortly after in a coach. The sad and long journey by rail then followed.

Dr. and Mrs. Fairbank met the party at Wimborne station, and several private carriages joined in the solemn procession on the way to the cemetery. Every mark of respect was shown as the cortege passed through the streets, every blind being drawn and every shutter up. The procession was met at the gates by the Rev. Murray an old friend of the deceased, and the Minister Choir. A full choral service took place in the chapel, and the hymn, "Now the Labourers Task is O'er" was sung at the graveside. A simultaneous service was held at Hilmarton.

The wreaths and a cross from Hilmarton were placed on the lid of the coffin. They bore the following inscriptions:- "From the Vicarage, Hilmarton," "A loving memorial from the Parishioners of Hilmarton," "If I live ye shall live also," "In affectionate remembrance from the members of the Hilmarton Choir," and "In memory of the love He bore us," the teachers and scholars of the Hilmarton day and Sunday schools. Many other wreaths from Wimborne, etc. completely covered the coffin. The cemetery was filled to overflowing many being unable to enter. It was noticed that every head was bared throughout the whole ceremony, a most reverential demeanor being observed by one and all present.

Among the mourners, in addition to Miss Fairbank and Dr. and Mrs. Fairbank, were to be noticed Lord Malmesbury, General Chichester, General Maclean, General Truel, Colonel Lambert, Colonel Portman, Major and Mrs. Spence Turner, the Rev. Paget, Rev. Williams, Rev. Twynning, Rev. Plater, Rev. Vosper Thomas, Rev. Fynes Clinton, the Misses Stewart, Dr. Battenburg and many others. Mr. T. Rummig, of Hilmarton being among the number.

The late Rev. R.W. Fairbank was of a Cheshire family. He studied and was prepared for Holy Orders at Lichfield Theological College, and was ordained deacon and priest to the curacy of Rugeley by the Bishop of Lichfield. he afterwards became curate of St. Margaret Dunham-Massey, in the diocese of Chester. From this sphere of work he removed to Bowden in Cheshire. Latterly he resided at Wimborne, and was appointed curate of Wimborne Minster in 1883, and remained in that capacity until 1887, having become the senior curate, and much beloved and respected by all in and around Wimborne. Several illnesses compelled him to give up his work and on recovering he travelled much abroad. On returning the Bishop of Salisbury desired him to again undertake parochial work in this diocese, and when the Rev. Canon Goddard wrote desiring a curate for Hilmarton the Bishop asked him to take up this, which proved to be his last field of labour. In every sphere of work he has deservedly won the affection and esteem of his parishioners, and has been indefatigable in his ministrations and his pastoral work among his flock. He leaves, besides his only sister, one brother, Dr. Fairbank, of Manchester.

*Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1890*



Reverend Fairbanks Grave can be found in Wimborne Minster Cemetery in consecrated section 9