

**THE REMARKABLE LIFE AND TIMES OF
THE REVEREND WILLIAM ADDISON FOUNTAINE,
RECTOR OF MIDDLETON ST GEORGE, 1798 – 1837**

Early Background and Preferment to Middleton St George

On 29 July 1798 in the church of St George, the Reverend William Addison stood in front of the congregation and made his statement of conformance and affirmation of faith as laid down by the Church of England.¹ He was filling the vacancy left by the death of the Reverend John Whaley, and was to serve as rector for thirty-nine years. Starting at the end of the eighteenth century, his incumbency extended well into the nineteenth century, and saw significant changes both nationally and locally, which were to push Middleton St George into the industrial orbit of the second half of the century.² He is interesting both for the personal circumstances of his life and for his association with some of these changes. His tenure spanned an eventful period and, despite the fact that he was absent from the parish for most of the first half of his long incumbency, his later impact on the face of the parish was considerable. He combined the traditional hunting and shooting image of an eighteenth-century parson with entrepreneurial land ownership, farm management and active participation in the birth of the new railway age. All of this was superimposed on his spiritual and pastoral obligations to his parish flock, almost entirely fulfilled by proxy in the early years, but later entered into with some vigour.

On the wider front, in his boyhood England had experienced the loss of the American colonies, with severe trade implications. The year before his graduation the French Revolution had sent shock waves through the country, and his middle years were lived in the shadow of the wars with France, which again affected trade, and had associated effects on agriculture and the economy at large. In the period after the end of the Napoleonic Wars there was social and political unrest and growing demand for reform. Pressure for better parliamentary representation finally resulted in the Reform Bill of 1832, which widened the franchise in his parish. However apart from his interest in agricultural matters and involvement with the early Stockton and Darlington Railway there is no evidence of his reaction to these wider events.

His will provided for the disposal of his books. The only known surviving volume, personally inscribed, is a copy of *The Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic*, but it would be interesting to know whether he had a wider field of interest. At the beginning of his incumbency Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were staying in nearby Sockburn but there is no indication that he ever encountered them. It is much more likely that during his long stay in Bath his

path might have crossed with that of Jane Austen, who, on the evidence of her novels, moved in similar social circles.

William Addison came from an established local clerical family. He was baptised on 12 July 1767 at Dinsdale, where his father was rector. Before that, his great uncle had been rector, having previously been headmaster of the Darlington Free Grammar School.³ William was the only son of his father's first marriage, but after his mother's death he gained a number of half-brothers and sisters from his father's second marriage.⁴



Illustration 1 - Dinsdale Rectory where William Addison was born in 1767

There is no information about young William's early education, but it is clear that he was destined to follow his father and his great uncle into the church. He graduated at University College, Oxford, in 1790, and was ordained deacon later that year, with his ordination as priest at York the following year.⁵ He continued a family association by becoming curate of West Rounton in the North Riding of Yorkshire. His father was rector there, combining that with his position as rector of Dinsdale.⁶ The intention seems to have been that the parochial duties at West Rounton would be largely carried out by the son William, who probably lived in the rectory house there, with his father at the family home at Dinsdale.

William's preferment to the rectory of Middleton St George in 1798 was his first and only incumbency in his own right. If he did move into the parish, where he lived is not known, as Surtees, writing some years later, says that the old parsonage house had been long ruinous.⁷ The parish he entered into was at the time of his collation and induction almost entirely devoted to farming, with

the main centre of population concentrated in the village of Middleton One Row on the high northern bank of the Tees.

The parish registers show that the new rector published banns of marriage in 1798 and 1799 and married one of the couples. After that, his absence from the parish over the next decade is very obvious. The register shows that up to 1813 the calling of banns and officiation at marriages were carried out by the curate or a visiting minister. It records that baptisms were often carried out by the rector's father 'William Addison snr. of Dinsdale in the absence of William Addison Fountaine, the rector of Middleton St. George'. In the early years Charles Cowper was curate, and was clearly responsible for most of the services. By 1810 he had been replaced by William Clementson, who combined the curacy with his post as master at the Free Grammar School in Darlington.⁸ In this period the curate and the churchwardens must have been responsible for all the day-to-day running of the parish.

Marriage to Mary Fountaine

The rector's absence from his parish followed his marriage on 22 April 1800 to Mary Fountaine at Leeds.⁹ Mary was twenty-seven years old at the time. Her father Joseph Fountaine had been a prosperous merchant there. He had been an alderman of the city and was mayor in 1777.¹⁰ The Fountaine family were anciently seated in Norfolk, but Mary's branch had more recently stemmed from the Craven district of Yorkshire. John Fountaine, who was Dean of York through the second half of the eighteenth century¹¹, was probably a relative. Both Mary's parents were dead before her marriage. Rather surprisingly for a man of status and substance, her father died intestate, administration being granted to his widow.¹² Mary was an only child, and when her mother died in 1799 she was the sole heiress, inheriting the family home and considerable other property in Leeds, Bradford and Craven. A condition of her mother's will placed a significant restriction on the inheritance, 'It being my will and intention (in case of her marriage) that my said Real Estate and the residue of my Personal Estate or any part thereof shall not be subject or liable to the power control or debts or engagements of her husband but that the same shall be to and for her own sole and separate use only'.¹³ This probably stemmed from her desire to secure her ailing daughter's financial independence, but may have been particularly prompted by an emerging friendship between her daughter and William Addison, a young clergyman of no substantial means. It was however by no means unusual to insert such a clause into a will where there was a sole heiress or as part of a marriage settlement when property was involved.

Mary was beset with seriously poor health, perhaps consumption, and the search for suitable medical treatment precipitated her marriage to William

Addison. The situation is spelled out in a letter dated 27 March 1800 from the Reverend Peter Haddon, the vicar of Leeds, to Walter Spencer Stanhope, MP for Carlisle and an influential friend of the Fountaine family:¹⁴

You will be surprised when I inform you that Miss Fountaine is to be married to Mr. Addison with all convenient speed. After a fair trial of the medicines presented by the Edinburgh physicians ... it hath been determined that the medicines should be laid aside, and the Bath waters taken upon the spot, as early in the month of April as it might be proper for her to undertake the journey. As Mr. Addison is to attend her thither and she had no female married relation to accompany them, it was settled between them to become man and wife before they set out.

The letter moves on to mention the preparation of the marriage writings. These were clearly of crucial importance in safeguarding Mary's considerable assets and ensuring that they remain under her control, as directed in her mother's will. The letter says 'Mr. Addison behaves very properly with regard to her fortune.' He was a party to indentures of lease and release, legal documents signed and dated in the two days before the marriage. By the first of these, Mary's estate was transferred to a trust, ensuring that her husband-to-be could not by marriage assume ownership of his wife's property and other assets. The second part of the legalities allowed Mary to direct the trustees to use from time to time the assets, profits and proceeds of the estate, thus providing funds when required for their married needs. Although the indentures have not been traced, there was probably also a requirement for William to add Mary's surname to his own, as two months later on 25 June he legally assumed the name William Addison Fountaine.¹⁵

William and Mary were married by special licence on 22 April 1800.¹⁶ The ceremony was carried out in the Fountaine family house in Leeds, and the officiant was the Reverend Peter Haddon, vicar of St Peter's, the parish church. It may be assumed that soon thereafter they resorted to Bath for Mary to take the waters.

The pattern of William's life was now dictated by domestic considerations, centred on his wife's health. How much time he was able to spend in his parish at this stage of his incumbency is unknown, but the absence of his name from those services where the officiant is recorded is significant and suggests that his presence was at best extremely infrequent. The diocesan register of licences for non-residence opens with the record on 1 March 1804 of his permission for absence, and the licence was renewed in subsequent years.¹⁷ Travel between

Leeds or Bath and Middleton St George in the pre-railway era would hardly be suitable for commuting.

In this period, substantial changes were taking place in his parish at Middleton St George. The eighteenth century had been one of slow and locally unremarkable progress. However at the beginning of the nineteenth century the pace of life was accelerating, principally due to the development of the Dinsdale Spa. A sulphur spring had been discovered on the high bank of the Tees in 1789, nine years before William Addison's entry into the rectory. After an impressive local take-up of the curative water, a wider and a more affluent clientele became attracted by its claimed efficacy for the relief and treatment of many complaints. The initial cold baths were supplemented by warm baths in 1804, and facilities were steadily improved. The houses of nearby Middleton One Row, hitherto mostly very modest cottages, were rebuilt in contemporary and more commodious style to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors. Village services and other facilities were also improved to meet the growing demand.¹⁸

One area of needed improvement was the church. The parish was served by the very modest and small church of St George, situated in the fields about a mile distant from Middleton One Row, and remote from most of the population of the parish. With its medieval or earlier origins, the church may have been adequate for the largely farming community, but the increasing numbers of visitors to the spa emphasised its deficiencies, both in terms of capacity and accessibility. A decision was taken to carry out major reconstruction work, involving a widening of the nave to increase the seating capacity, and a complete rebuilding of the chancel. A later rector records that the rebuilding took place in 1805 'in the time of the Reverend William Addison Fountaine'.¹⁹ If it were not for this reference, the dating of the changes would have been uncertain. Surprisingly, the parish register makes no mention of the work, and no diocesan record has been found. The disruption of services must have been severe.

The enlargement was presumably adequate to accommodate the local congregation together with spa visitors, but the church remained even after the rebuilding a simple small structure with very little architectural adornment. It retained its black oak box pews and a three-decker pulpit, from which the clergyman delivered his sermons. Inherently, nothing could be done about its remoteness until the vastly changed circumstances of the ironworks era resulted sixty-six years later in the building of a new church.

Maiden sisters, Elizabeth and Sally Cocks, had come into the position of lord of the manor on the death of their nephew William Pemberton, changing their surname to his on their succession in 1801.²⁰ They may have been the

moving spirits and financial supporters of the rebuilding of the church, in which they were both buried a few years later.²¹ Yet the responsibility for the execution of the alterations must have been largely in the hands of the churchwardens, the vestry and the curate. However it is hardly likely that such extensive works could have been carried out without some input from the rector and it is possible that he contributed financially. His own financial position had improved with his marriage to Mary Fountaine, and traditionally the upkeep of the chancel was regarded as the responsibility of the incumbent. On 6 July 1805 the register notes that he officiated at the marriage of Richard Longstaff and Ann Meggison. It is significant that this is one of only two occasions on which the rector is recorded as officiating in an otherwise blank decade, and it is probably associated with his extended presence during the time of rebuilding.



Illustration 2 - The old parish church of Middleton St George as it stands today. Even after its 1805 enlargement it was still small, simple in plan and with virtually no architectural embellishment.

If visiting Bath was originally intended to have been on an intermittent basis, it must soon have become apparent that the traveling involved was too much for an invalid. Presumably at some early stage, the Addison Fountaines made the decision to move to Bath permanently, with the aim of better coping with Mary's health problems, and making more readily accessible the appropriate medical treatment. It might be argued that there were curative waters within the rector's parish, claimed by local advocates to be second to none. Dinsdale Spa

was, however, still in a relatively early stage of its development, and its facilities were not remotely comparable to those available in Bath, where expert medical attention was well established. Another factor was doubtless the generally milder climate of the south west, compared with the bleaker prospect of the north east, and the more refined society of Bath may also have been an attraction.

William and Mary acquired No. 8 Beaufort Buildings²², later 8 Beaufort East, a fine relatively new Georgian terrace house of three principal storeys, then on the edge of the expanding city and set back a little from the London road. Behind the house extended a long narrow garden. At its far extremity was a stable and coach house, exiting onto a road. It was very similar to the house in which Jane Austen lived in Sydney Place. The Austen family left Bath in 1806, by which time the Addison Fountaines seem to have been in permanent residence. They shared the same parish church of St Swithin's, and the burial of Jane's father and that of William himself are recorded in the same parish register.



Illustration 3 - 8 Beaufort East, the Addison Fountaine house in Bath.

This type of house was a suitable setting for modestly gracious living, although the ability to enjoy this and the Bath social scene must have been curtailed by Mary's health which does not seem to have improved. In 1805 she drew up her will which under the terms of her mother's bequest and her own marriage contract she was empowered to do independently. In the absence of such provision at this period a wife's possessions became the property of her husband.²³ But although Mary lived on for another eight years her health seems to have deteriorated steadily. In 1808 she was declared to be 'in such a state of debility as to be unable to remove from Bath to the north of England without imminent risk to her life.'²⁴

Ultimately almost all of Mary's substantial assets did pass to her husband, not by customary right but by her personal intent. She died in March 1812, at the age of thirty-nine, and was buried at Leeds, the register entry reading 'Mary Addison Fountaine of Bath'

By her will, proved later that year²⁵, there was an immediate bequest of £4,000 to William and he was to have the Fountaine family house and associated land in Leeds. There were other beneficiaries of the trust, and after these had been satisfied the trustees were 'to pay the interest, dividends and profits of the residue of the said trust monies ... to my said Dear Husband William Addison Fountaine for and during the term of his natural life from time to time as the same shall become due for his own use'. Her estate also included two shares in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Navigation which suggests that her father may have been part of the Leeds group whose efforts helped obtain the 1770 Act which authorized the construction of the canal.²⁶

Middleton St George and Marriage to Lucy Rattray

In the latter part of the rector's prolonged absence from the parish, the curate the Reverend William Clementson had taken responsibility for maintaining the services of the church. It was he who completed the questionnaire at the time of the diocesan Clergy Visitation of 1810. The single Sunday service 'both prayer and preaching' was held alternately at 10.30am one week and at 2.30pm the next. As was common practice at the time, the communion sacrament was celebrated only five times a year – at Christmas, Easter (twice), Whitsuntide and Michaelmas. For his duties as curate of Middleton St George and also Dinsdale the Reverend Mr Clementson received £50 a year. It is hardly surprising that he augmented this meagre sum with the income from his position as master of the Grammar School at Darlington.²⁷

With the death of his wife, William Addison Fountaine was able to anticipate taking up the duties of his living at Middleton St George. His enhanced

personal financial situation enabled him to override the poor endowment of the living, which remained a grievance for later rectors.

In September 1813 he baptised the daughter of Ralph and Margaret Goldsboro. This is the first indication from the registers that he had begun more frequent residence in the parish, and his name appears more often thereafter as officiant at services. The diocesan non-residence register for 1813 does not include a licence for him to be absent, but that may be an administrative oversight, as licences for non-residence are recorded for 1814, 1815 and 1816.²⁸ In this case the lack of a rectory house may have been a reason given for continuing the leave of absence. The curate William Clementson lived in Darlington.

Although still largely non-resident it may be a sign of his growing commitment to the parish as well as an example of his entrepreneurial aspirations, that by 1814 he had bought the large Forster Field Farm, extending to 234 acres.²⁹ He had previously had two small parcels of land, but these were almost certainly the glebe land attached to his rectorship, and were leased out. Although he may not have been aware of it, his new acquisition included most of the buried remains of the mediaeval village of West Hartburn, long forgotten since its demise some 250 years earlier.³⁰

He did not relinquish the house in Bath, or his interests there. Early in 1816 he re-married, to Lucy Rattray, at the Chapel of St Mary in fashionable Queen's Square.³¹ Lucy was the youngest daughter of David Rattray, M.D. of Coventry.³² He is elsewhere described as being of 'Coventry and Bristol'³³, and this gives rise to speculation as to the background to his association with Lucy. It may be that Dr Rattray, from his practice in Bristol, was the medical adviser who had tended William's first wife Mary, and that the introduction to his daughter was through that connection. Lucy was aged about thirty-one, while William was nearly fifty at the time of their marriage.

If the assumption as to William and Lucy's meeting is correct, the doctor did not long outlive his patient, as his will was proved in 1813, just eleven months after the death of Mary Addison Fountaine. By Dr Rattray's will³⁴ Lucy as one of five daughters was to receive a fifth share of the proceeds from the sale of their father's substantial real estate, which included his house in Coventry and other property in Warwickshire. After specific bequests had been discharged, Lucy was also to receive a fifth of the residue of her father's personal estate. The two daughters who were unmarried at the time of writing the will, Lucy and Charlotte, were to have between them 'all my shares in the Grand Junction Canal and all my interests therein as one of the proprietors of the said canal'. The canal had been

completed in 1800.³⁵ Dr Rattray must have been musically inclined, and Lucy was seemingly similarly talented, as his musical instruments were left to her.

William Addison Fountaine's re-marriage gave renewed impetus to development of his plans for life at Middleton St George, facilitated by the further enhancement of his financial position. He divided his Forster Field Farm into two separate farms, the northern part becoming Foster House Farm, and the southern half the new Home Farm. (See Figure 8)³⁶ Foster House Farm was rented out, and worked and occupied by his tenant Michael Middleton. On the newly created Home Farm, as Surtees recorded a few years later, he built 'a splendid mansion house upon his own estate within the Parish'³⁷, to provide a suitable home to welcome and impress his new wife. The house is of two storeys, of simple but pleasing square form, and of brick construction with stone quoins and window framing. It would have provided commodious and stylish accommodation for the rector and his wife and the family they were to have, reflecting their status and social standing.

William and Lucy's family began with a son, called William after his father. He was born on 11 June 1817, when they were still living in Bath. Soon afterwards they must have moved to Middleton St George, as their next child, a daughter named Lucy after her mother, was born there and baptised on 7 February 1819. The house in Bath was retained, but was rented to a tenant.



Illustration 4 - The House built around 1818 by the rector as his family home on his estate at Middleton St George

Four more children were born to them at Middleton St George, as recorded in the parish register. A second son was born on 20 May 1820, and christened by his father, naming him David after his mother's father. He survived only four days, being buried on 24 May. A daughter followed and was christened on 25 July 1822 Rosamund after her paternal grandmother. Another daughter, Dorothy after her maternal grandmother, was christened on 16 July 1824. Finally, after a longer gap, a son Joseph was born, the name given to him at his baptism on Christmas day 1829 coming from his mother's father.

William's assumption of his full duties as rector is demonstrated by the record of baptisms, banns and marriages in the register. From being an almost complete absentee, his name appears regularly, although clearly he shared the service duties with the curate.

Daily Life 1821–1823

From 1821 to 1823 the rector kept a diary of his activities and events, personal, family, parochial, farming and leisure. Unfortunately the diary is no longer extant, and only a small abstract of the text survives, as printed here in the Appendix.³⁸ What there is does shed an interesting light on his daily life and that of his family and parish.

The household employed several servants. There was a housemaid and an under-maid, and a children's nurse and under-nurse, in addition to a milkmaid and gardener. Servants were sometimes a source of trouble, as witnessed by the diary entry for 31 October 1822. 'Mrs.Fountaine much disturb'd by Betty Robinson the under nurse's ungrateful behaviour'. Difficulty in getting and keeping satisfactory servants is indicated by the entry a month later on 2 December 'Mrs.F. had three new maid servants this term, two in the nursery and one dairy'. The rector himself had a manservant, who is mentioned several times, as when the rector on 30 May 1822 'sent Richard to Stockton for Nurse Wetherall'. As their daughter Rosamund was born within a month or so, Nurse Wetherall's call may have been a maternity visit.

Family ailments were common. On 31 October he wrote 'I had taken Dr.Peacock's medicine and was much purg'd by it'. Dr Peacock was one of the medical practitioners associated with the Dinsdale Spa, and a strong advocate of its curative powers.³⁹ On 5 May 1821 'the children each had a dose of calomel'.

On 1 February 1821, the diary records 'Mrs.Addison sitting for her likeness to Mr.Bewick'. This was not Thomas Bewick the famous wood engraver, although possibly a relative of his. He was William Bewick, born in Darlington,

who was a capable artist who in hard times undertook portrait painting of local gentry and their ladies.⁴⁰

The rector had the management of the newly created Home Farm in his own hands. He had three labourers to tend the 114 acres of mixed arable and grass. On 22 September 1821 he recorded '40 stooks of corn sent to Oliver's thrashing mill'. Other crops were grown, an entry on 29 March 1823 reading 'Beans sown about Tues. and Wedy'. Numerous entries relating to livestock included on 29 November 1821 'The white cow calved. Bull calf', and on 1 March 1823 'The red cow and Dalia Lucy both taken to Curry's bull'. Calves and pigs went to the local butcher, but with a proportion returned for their own consumption.

Horses were the providers of power for farming operations and were valuable assets. The diary records on 24 February 1821 'Old farmer horse taken ill', and on 10 March 'Pattison the farrier came to see the black mare'. Later in the year the rector was at Yarm Fair, an annual event renowned for horse dealing, and was doubtless disappointed to record on 19 September 'Three young horses taken for sale but only disposed of black mare 37 years old for £26' (possibly a faulty transcription of the diary). Much of the rector's daily traveling was on horseback, and horses were also kept for drawing their carriage when transporting his wife and family.

Sporting activities, mainly in the form of hunting and shooting, played a prominent part in the rector's life. The 19 January 1821 entry reads 'Out with the Hurworth Hounds, had a good run. Mr. Wilkinson of Ditton (?) Castle nearly drown'd in swimming Mr. Maud's horse over the Tees at Newsham. A fine day. Caught a bird with the net'. The latter was an alternative to the more usual shooting of game, a bag of thirty-seven partridge and pheasants being listed in 1822. He kept greyhounds and used them for hunting hares.

The running of the parish was no longer devolved to others, although the rector appears to have shared the service duties with the curate. On 28 May he was 'at the church to marry James Teesdale and Mary Peverall and from there with Mrs. F. and all child's and sister Ann to Middleton to see the race for the wedding favours'. The church, although enlarged earlier in the century was still extremely inconveniently situated, particularly in bad weather, as instanced by the entry for 25 May 1823 (presumably Whit Sunday), when he recorded 'Very wet. Few people at the church and in consequence the sacrament was deferr'd. Mr Clementson read prayers. No sermon. He got wet and exchanged part of his dress'.

He did not neglect his social and pastoral duties, and notes on 14 February 1821 'Sent bacon and flour to poor people'. This was a time of agricultural depression following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. On 8 April 1822 he was 'sent for, and attended a poor sick man of the name of Jonathan Fowler'. His concern did not end at the parish, as evidenced by the entry on 30 May 1822 'Walk'd with Mrs.F. to Middleton, with papers relative to the distressed Irish'. The troubles being experienced in Ireland were even greater than elsewhere and famine in that year was widespread.

The diary notes correspondence with a Mrs Wedderburn. She can be identified by reference to a memorial tablet to her in St George's Church. She was Elizabeth, an older sister of William's wife Lucy. Her marriage to Charles Wedderburn in 1797 led to a link with one of the greatest scientific minds of the nineteenth century, their great-nephew being James Clerk Maxwell, the physicist who derived the laws between magnetism and electricity, crucial to the subsequent development of much of today's technology.

The Stockton and Darlington Railway

The years when William became established in the parish as a family man were also some of the most significant years for the parish and for future local industrial development in so far as they corresponded with what has been termed 'the birth of the railway age'. A canal or railway connecting the west Durham coalfield with the coast had been projected for some time, and the decisive culmination of all the deliberation was the first Stockton and Darlington Railway Act which received royal assent on 19 April 1821. This had been promoted on the strength of financial support promised in an agreement of 1818, in which William Addison Fountaine undertook to provide £500 out of a total of £120,900.⁴¹ His railway involvement doubtless provided the professional contact when he made his will on 1 February 1821 at the house of 'Mr Newbourne', as recorded in his diary. This is a mis-spelling or mis-reading of the name of Francis Mewburn, the solicitor of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

In the context of the railway development the rector's purchase of Forster Field Farm proved to be a far more profitable investment than he could have anticipated. This arose from the fact that the route of the line scythed through the full width of the parish, and over one third of that length was within his Forster Field Farm, or Foster House Farm as the northern part became. This made the rector an important figure in the planning of the line, and opened the way to financial profit from the sale of land for the track.

He was named as one of the Company of Proprietors in the 1821 parliamentary act, which authorised construction to proceed.⁴² At a meeting in

the King's Head in Darlington on 12 May 1821, a committee led by the Darlington Quaker businessman Edward Pease was set up to further the arrangements for the building of the line and William Addison Fountaine was one of its members.⁴³ George Stephenson was later in the year appointed engineer to the company, and he carried out a new survey to establish the final route of the line. On 30 May 1822 the rector noted in his diary 'Mr. Stephenson called about the line of the railroad through my farm'. Later that year, on 2 December, he noted 'Wrote to Edward Pease in answer to a letter from him abt. compensation to be allowed by the Rail Road Company for land on my farm'. On 29 March 1823 'The ladies walk'd and I rode to Fighting Cocks to see the commencement of the rail road'. On 21 April Mr Coats, the S&DR agent, paid him £200 in respect of Foster House land taken for the railway. The line was opened on Tuesday 27 September 1825, commemorated by the well-known painting by John Dobbin. No doubt William Addison Fountaine was a participant on the occasion.



Illustration 5 - John Dobbin's famous painting of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway on 27 September 1825. The Reverend William Addison Fountaine was an early supporter and shareholder. The line ran through his land at Middleton St George, and only a quarter of a mile from his house,

From its tentative beginning, with horses as the main mode of traction, and '*Locomotion*' the sole steam locomotive, the Stockton and Darlington Railway progressed rapidly to enhance its facilities and increase the volume of traffic

handled, although it was not until 1833 that steam hauled passenger trains became a regular feature. In 1835 Sir George Head, visiting the spa, wrote of being 'Speedily consigned to a steam-carriage on the Darlington railroad', from which he alighted at the Fighting Cocks Inn, little more than a mile away from the spa.⁴⁴ The rector as a shareholder had a vested interest in its success. He and his family would have had a direct view of passing traffic on the railway only a quarter of a mile away, until growth of landscaping trees obliterated it.

The Later Years

The further improvement in the rector's financial position associated with his involvement with the railway seems to have encouraged more landowning aspirations. Sometime after 1826, he acquired White House Farm in the north of the parish and extending into the parish of Haughton le Skerne (later Sadberge).⁴⁵ Following this he came into possession of both High and Low Goosepool Farms, which were at that time in the parish of Long Newton.⁴⁶ Taking into account the Long Newton properties and extensions of Middleton St George farms into adjacent parishes, the rector and the squire had approximately equal shares of 60% of the total area (757 acres to the rector and 790 acres to the squire).

The rector's share, as shown on the accompanying map (see Figure 8), encompassed most of what had been the medieval lands of West Hartburn.⁴⁷ A remaining feature of the Middle Ages, the outdated system of tithes, was to disappear at the end of his incumbency. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 formally replaced payments in kind or money payments in lieu by fixed rent charges, subject only to annual adjustment to take account of variations in corn prices. The apportionment of rent charges was done on a parish by parish basis, and a meeting was held at Middleton One Row on 1 May 1837 for this purpose. The Tithe Commissioners confirmed the agreement on 17 February 1838, with a supplementary agreement on 19 March 1839.⁴⁸ In the agreement, the rector was both a payer and recipient of tithe in the form of rent charges. As a landowner he was to pay the stipulated rent charges for the farms he owned, and as rector he was to receive approximately half the proceeds, the other half going to the Cocks lord of the manor as lay impropriator. As far as William Addison Fountaine was concerned, events overtook his naming in the agreement, as he died in the period between the making of the agreement and its confirmation.

His last recorded service at Middleton St George was a baptism on 22 August 1836. Less than a month later, on 19 September, he was in London at the Central Criminal Court, giving evidence at the trial of George Edward Peacock. The rector, together with William Watkins and the defendant, were trustees holding £7,814 5s. 9d. in 3% consols on behalf of Selina Wilmer who had married Peacock's brother. Peacock was in deep financial trouble, and had forged a power

of attorney, enabling him to sell the consols and misappropriate the proceeds. William Addison Fountaine testified that the signature on the power of attorney was not his and that he had no knowledge of the two people purporting to have witnessed it. The case was clear, and the defendant was sentenced to death, with a strong recommendation for mercy on account of his previous good character. William Addison Fountaine was asked how long he had known the defendant, and he responded 'I suppose twenty years – I knew him from a child – he has always moved in respectable society, and bore a good character down to the time of this transaction'.⁴⁹

William Addison Fountaine died at the end of the following spring, on 31 May 1837, just three weeks before the accession of Queen Victoria. He died at Clifton on the edge of Bristol.⁵⁰ Whether it was ill health, business, or other reasons that had taken him south is not known. Likewise, it is not known whether his wife and family had accompanied him, but his death at Clifton suggests that he or they had not at that time taken repossession of their house in Bath. He may well have seen the early stages of the building of Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge, the foundation stone of which was laid on 27 August 1836. (Around the time of William's death the contractor went bankrupt and, with other financial difficulties, the bridge was not completed until almost thirty years later.)

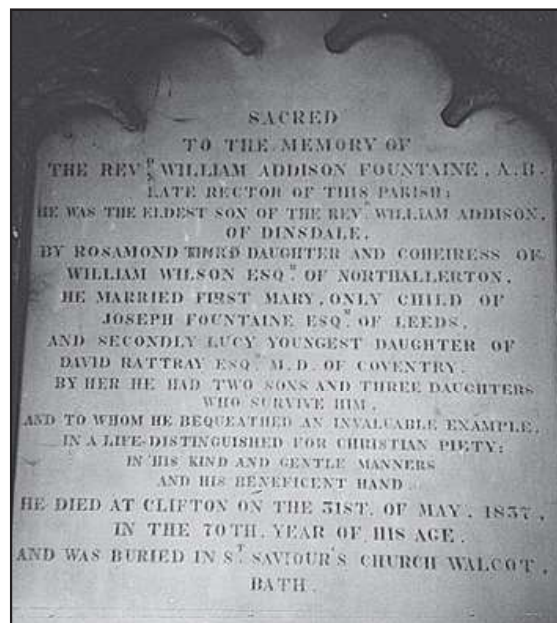


Illustration 6 - Memorial tablet to the Reverend William Addison Fountaine in the chancel of St George's Church



Illustration 7 - St Saviour's Church, Bath. William Addison Fountaine and his wife Lucy are interred in the crypt.

He was buried in the crypt of St Saviour's Church in Bath⁵¹, virtually at the back gate of his house at 8 Beaumont East. A plaque in the chancel of St George's Church commemorates his life and service in the parish of Middleton St George.

The surviving evidence has allowed an insight into some of the intimacies of the life of the Reverend William Addison Fountaine, but does nothing to indicate his spiritual views or churchmanship. There is no information to suggest how he related to the shades of Anglicanism between the growing evangelical movement and the more conservative arm of the established church, with the Oxford movement exerting a powerful influence in the latter years of his incumbency.

In his time, the campaign against absentee clergy was gathering force, with condemnation of the widespread practice of entering into a benefice and then walking away, leaving all responsibility with a poorly paid curate. However, the case of William Addison Fountaine was unusual in so far as his frequent, if not entire, absence in the first third of his incumbency was not simply a life style choice, but a decision brought about by the chronic illness of his wife. When this condition ceased to exist, he would seem to have had the resources to continue a comfortable life in Bath, but instead chose for the rest of his life to revert to his living and the responsibilities of his parish.

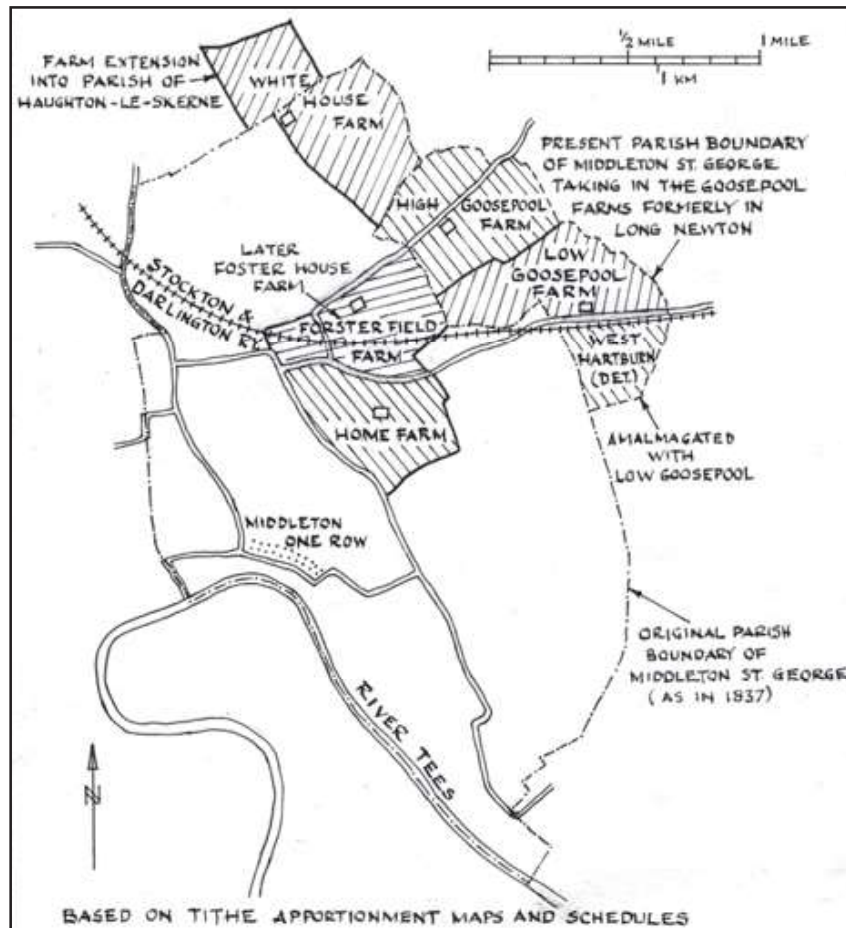


Illustration 8 - The Middleton St George estate of the Reverend William Addison Fountaine at his death in 1837.

Postscript

In his will⁵² made in 1830 he appointed four trustees, his wife and his three brothers, Robert, John and Joseph Addison. His mansion house at Middleton St George and his five farms within the parishes of Middleton St George and Long Newton were left in trust for his eldest son William when he reached the age of twenty-one. (He was only nineteen at the time of his father's death.) This was however subject to a life interest to his wife, allowing her to continue living in the house. His properties in Leeds and Bath were likewise left in trust, but an 1835 codicil evidently contemplated that his wife might not wish to continue to

live at Middleton St George after his death, and in that event she was to have possession of the house in Bath. He also had North Yorkshire properties in Northallerton, Danby Wiske and Brompton.

A second codicil, made just two days before his death, included the provision 'It is also intended that Joseph should have a certain sum secured to him, to finish the purchase of five shares in the new Railroad'. This presumably refers to Brunel's Great Western line to Bristol, for which the Second Act had been passed in 1835, with the first section from London opening in 1838. It demonstrates the continued family interest and involvement in the dramatic expansion of the railway system.

At the time of making of his will, the house in Bath was occupied by a tenant, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Bunbury.⁵³ At some stage Lucy Addison Fountaine did decide to move south again with their family, resuming occupation of 8 Beaumont East⁵⁴, and dying there fourteen years after her husband on 5 May 1851.⁵⁵ She was buried beside her husband in the crypt of St.Saviour's Church.⁵⁶

Their son William followed his father into the church and became the first vicar of the newly built Christ Church in Reading. He later became Canon of Gibraltar, and died as vicar of Ossett in West Yorkshire in 1893.⁵⁷ Their great grandson, the Reverend William Robert Fountaine Addison, was one of three chaplains to be awarded the Victoria Cross in the Great War.⁵⁸

With the exception of Home Farm itself, the other four farms at Middleton St George continued as one estate until the estate was broken up in 1938, and sold as separate farms. The sale prospectus drew attention to the association with the Stockton and Darlington Railway, noting that at the 1925 Centenary 'the present King and Queen, then the Duke and Duchess of York, watched the rail procession from a stand erected on fields forming part of the Estate'.

The rector's mansion house at Middleton St George became known later as Middleton Hall and served, with the addition of more buildings, as a mental institution. The original house still stands at the centre of the recently developed Middleton Hall Retirement Village.

At the time of William Addison Fountaine's death, the great transformation of the parish of Middleton St George was yet to come, but he did see and experience the advance of the industrial age and its effects, most prominently in the railway with which he was intimately connected and which was a major factor in the coming of the ironworks some thirty years later. In his time he saw

the development of the Stockton and Darlington Railway for passenger traffic, by 1841 the main line connection between York and Darlington opened the way to the south, and in the same year the Great Western line from London to Bristol was completed. In one generation the constraints of distance and difficulties of travel, which had virtually divorced him from his parish during the period of his first marriage, had been removed, and his son would, on the rapidly expanding rail network, have the facility to travel almost anywhere within the day in relative comfort. Aided by the introduction of the telegraph in the decade following the rector's death and the Penny Post in 1840, a new concept of mobility and flexibility in living, working and leisure was opened up.

The parsons who followed at Middleton St George had the progressive benefits of Victorian times, but also increased responsibilities to a changing and more demanding population. The industrial village which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century was far removed from the rural flock which William Addison Fountaine had been able to leave in the care of his curate at the beginning of the century.

The Surviving Extracts from the Diary of the Reverend William Addison Fountaine, 1821–1823

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Jany. 19th. 1821 | Out with the Hurworth Hounds, had a good run. Mr. Wilkinson of Ditton Castle nearly drown'd in swimming Mr. Maud's Horse over the Tees at Newsham. A fine Day. Caught a bird with the net. |
| Feby. 1st. | At Darlington with Mrs ... had a letter to announce the Birth of Mrs. Christie's Son. I executed my Will at Mr. Newbourne's House, himself wife and sister 3 witnesses. Mrs. Addison sitting for her likeness for Mr. Bewick. Got 20£ from the Bank. |
| Feby. 5th. | Took letter to Mrs. Wedderburn to Darlington, attended meeting on railroad concern & Stockton turnpike, bought cloth for Benj's livery. Mrs. Lemuserier call'd. |
| Feby. 14th. | At Home rode near it and kill'd a Hare. Men at the Cam in the fallow field, fine and fair weather. No rain for over three weeks. Sent Bacon and Flour to poor People. |
| Feby. 24th. | A remarkable warm Day. Walk'd in Middleton after which took out Greyhounds & kill'd two hares. Old Farmer Horse taken ill. |

March 10th. A Stormy Day. Pattison the Farrier came to see the Black Mare. I was out with the Grey Hounds.

May 5th. Rode to Darlington, A letter from Mrs. Christie. Gardener here to plant Potatoes. Butcher took away the Calf. The children took each a Doze of Calomel. Paid Pattison the Farrier his Bill.

Sep. 22nd. Rode with Mrs. F. to Middleton in the morning. In the Evening out a netting. Caught one Bird. 40 stooks of corn sent to Oliver's thrashing mill. New maidservant came this evening.

Sep. 19th. At Yarm Fair. 3 young horses taken for sale but only disposed [Should be Oct.] of black mare 37 years old for 26£. A fine day.

Oct. 20th. Yarm Cheese Fair. Sent Richard to Darlington.

Nov. 24th. An extreme cold day. Pay'd Mr. Eldon acct. to this date. The white cow calved a Bull Calf.

Feby. 11th. 1822 Drove with Mrs. F. to Darlington where dined. Got £30 at the Bank, paid Juliet. Mr. White of Brentin [Brankin] Moor sent off to Durham Jail for shooting his Servant Man. A letter from Mrs. Watkins, Daventry. Sent to the Post & a letter from Mrs. Wedderburn received.

April 8th. Great Fair at Darlington. Some of us there. Sent for, and attended a poor sick man of the name of Jonathan Fowler.

May 30th. Sent Richard to Stockton for Nurse Wetherall. Walk'd with Mrs. F. to Middleton, with papers relative to the distressed Irish. Mr. Stephenson called about the line of rail road thro' my Farm.

Oct. 31st. Rode out abt. home. A fine Day. Richard to Darlington. Mrs. Fountaine much disturb'd by Betty Robinson the under nurse's ungrateful Behaviour. I had taken Dr. Peacock's medicine & was much purg'd by it. Rec'd a letter from Somervell enclosing a Bill for 200£ suppose this towards Mortimer's rent 1821.

Dec. 2nd. With Mrs. A.F. & two elder children & din'd at Darlington. Wrote to Edward Pease in answer to a letter from him abt.

Compensation to be allowed by the rail Road Committee for land on my Farm. Mrs. F. had three new Maid Servants this Term, 2 in the nursery & one Dairy do.

- Dec. 4th. Doctor Peacock came to visit me. I walked about Home, sent Richard to Dinsdale. Messrs. Boazman & Byers came to look at Farm. John Oliver caught a man stealing his Poultry. With him to Eaglescliffe.
- March 1st. 1823 A fine day. We all got out to walk in the Garden. The Red Cow & the Dalia Lucy both taken to Curry's Bull. Richard sent to Darlington & brought letter from Mrs. Atkinson's son-in-law at Linton.
- March 21st. A Wet Day. West absent. Kept within-doors. Mrs. Gascoyne's long funeral procession of a Herse, 4 chaises, a Gig and 28 horsemen, for interment at Hurworth.
- March 29th. The ladies walk'd and I rode to Fighting Cocks to see the commencement of the rail road. Very dry but cold weather for last week. Beans sown about Tues. and Wedy. Richard went to Darlington. Brought a letter from Mrs. Watkins.
- Apl. 21st. Took Jane Beckett & sister Harriet to Darlington & left them. Mrs. A.F. and I dined there. Received from Mr. Coats Agent to Rail Road 200£ on account of Ground taken from my Farm. Called on return Home at Anderson and went to Oliver's to baptise his eleventh child call'd Ralph.
- May 25th. Very wet. Few people at the Church & in consequence the Sacrament was Deferr'd. Mr. Clementson read Prayers. No Sermon. He got wet and exchanged part of his Dress.
- May 28th. At the church to Marry James Teesdale and Mary Peverall and from there wt. Mrs. F. and child's. and sister Ann to Middleton to see the Race for the Wedding Favours. Mr. Mrs. Fryer called.
- Dec. 26th. Drove out in Carriage with Mrs. Fountaine and I stop'd at Low Middleton with Mr. Cocks about Tithe. Joseph Addison was at our House upon my return & I first know from John Wilkinson of poor Marmaduke Theckston being drown'd at Worsall in crossing the River after the Hounds.

The diary was found by Mr H.T. Kirby, who wrote an article on it entitled 'A Durham Parson Woodforde' for the Church Times of 29 December 1961. Lamentably the diary was lost whilst in the hands of a potential publisher and all that remains are the extracts printed here. The part played by Mr Kirby and the Church Times in preserving these fragments is acknowledged.

NOTES

- ¹ Durham County Record Office (DCRO), Middleton St George parish register.
- ² A. Pallister, *Middleton St George, Windows on the Evolution of a Tees Valley Parish* (Durham History of Education Project, 2007).
- ³ W.H.D. Longstaffe, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Darlington* (1854), p.257.
- ⁴ DCRO, Dinsdale, Hurworth and Darlington parish registers.
- ⁵ Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections (DULASC), Huddleston papers – clergy biographical index.
- ⁶ North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO), West Rounton parish register.
- ⁷ R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (1823), vol.3, p.225.
- ⁸ Longstaffe, p.257.
- ⁹ West Yorkshire Record Office (WYRO), St Peter's, Leeds parish register.
- ¹⁰ Leeds Central Library, biographical details from newspaper cutting.
- ¹¹ *Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1925), p. 458.
- ¹² Borthwick Institute for Archives (BI), letters of administration of Joseph Fountaine, 1791.
- ¹³ BI, will of Mary Fountaine, proved 1799.
- ¹⁴ West Yorkshire Archives, Bradford, Sp.St.6/1/119.
- ¹⁵ Huddleston.
- ¹⁶ WYRO, St Peter's, Leeds parish register.
- ¹⁷ DULASC DDR/EA/CLN/1/1 Register Book for Non-residence.
- ¹⁸ A. Pallister, 'The Dinsdale Spa', *DCLHS Bulletin* 14 1972, pp.21–28.

- ¹⁹ DCRO EP/Mi SG14, Records of Interest, compiled by the Rev. John Groves 14.
- ²⁰ *Victoria County History, Durham* vol.3, p.296.
- ²¹ DCRO, Middleton St George, parish register.
- ²² Huddleston.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *The Oxford History of England, England 1870–1914*, 86.
- ²⁵ Will of Mary Addison Fountaine, 1805, proved 1812.
- ²⁶ C. Hadfield and J. Boughey, *British Canals*, 8th ed., 1998, pp.71–73.
- ²⁷ DULASC AUC/1–4 Clergy Visitation 1810.
- ²⁸ DULASC DDR/EA/CLN/1/1 Register Book for Nonresidence.
- ²⁹ DCRO Q/D/L 106 Land tax assessment 1814.
- ³⁰ A. Pallister, *Middleton St. George*.
- ³¹ Huddleston. (The chapel was demolished in 1875.)
- ³² Memorial inscription in St George’s Church.
- ³³ Huddleston.
- ³⁴ BI, will of David Rattray, 1810, proved 1813.
- ³⁵ Hadfield, pp.100–102.
- ³⁶ Assessed as one holding for land tax, but division clearly defined at time of tithe commutation (See Illustration 8).
- ³⁷ Surtees, vol.3, p.225.
- ³⁸ H.T. Kirby, 'A Durham Parson Woodforde', *Church Times* 29 December 1961.
- ³⁹ J. Peacock, *Observations upon the Composition and Uses of the Water, at the New Sulphur Baths, at Dinsdale near Darlington, in the County of Durham* (1805, second edition with additions, 1829).
- ⁴⁰ Longstaffe, p.342.
- ⁴¹ J.S. Jeans, *History of the Stockton and Darlington Railway* (1875, re-published 1975), app. II.
- ⁴² Darlington Head of Steam Railway Museum, *Stockton & Darlington Railway Act Book*.

- ⁴³ Jeans, p.42.
- ⁴⁴ Sir George Head, *A Home Tour through the Manufacturing Districts of England in the Summer of 1835* (1836, re-published 1968).
- ⁴⁵ The property is included in his will of 1830, but not in his land tax assessment of 1826.
- ⁴⁶ As included in his will of 1830.
- ⁴⁷ A. Pallister, *Middleton St.George*.
- ⁴⁸ DULASC, tithe commutation maps, schedules and agreements for Middleton St George and Long Newton.
- ⁴⁹ Records of Central Criminal Court, Eleventh Session, held 19 September 1836.
- ⁵⁰ Memorial inscription in St George's Church.
- ⁵¹ St Swithin's, Bath parish register (St Saviour's did not have its own parish register until later). Monumental inscription in St Saviour's Church.
- ⁵² Will of William Addison Fountaine 1830–7, proved 1837 (BI).
- ⁵³ In the will he is named as Thomas Bunbury Esq., but is referred to elsewhere as Lieutenant Colonel Bunbury. He was possibly related to Sir Henry Edward Bunbury, who was delegated in 1815 to inform Napoleon of his sentence of exile to St Helena (*Concise Dictionary of National Biography*, 1925, p.167).
- ⁵⁴ They were there at the 1841 census.
- ⁵⁵ Monumental inscription. She survived for just one month after the census of 1851.
- ⁵⁶ Parish register of St Saviour's, Bath. Monumental inscription in St Saviour's Church.
- ⁵⁷ Huddleston.
- ⁵⁸ Gerald Gliddon, *The Sideshows*, Sutton Publishing (2005), pp 81–85.

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