

More Than Oliver Twist: Biography

Name: George Marsh

B. 1813, d. 1892

George Marsh was born 11 March 1813 and baptized on 12 December that year at St Matthew's Church, Chapel Allerton, Leeds (1). His parents were James and Mary Marsh who were from Alwoodley. George's brother William was born 18 May 1818 (2) and his sister Elizabeth in about 1822 (3).

In 1841, aged about 25, George lived with his widowed mother in Alwoodley, Harewood and worked as a labourer (4). His father James had died in 1836 (5). It is likely that George's mother died in the 1840s because in 1851, George was head of the household, sharing a home at Hawk Nest, Alwoodley with his brother William and sister Elizabeth (6).

George's sister died in 1852 (7). By 1861 George was lodging with Moses and Ann Atkinson on Myrtle Row, part of the Chapel Allerton parish (8).

George's brother William married on 4 December 1865 (9), but there is no evidence George ever married, despite being described a widower in his 1881 census return (10). By 1881 he lived at Leeds Union Workhouse. He was described as a labourer in a foundry and as born in Leeds.

In the 1880s, George was prosecuted on two occasions. The first offence in 1882, when he was charged with being 'Drunk and Riotous in Leeds' and sentenced to one calendar month in prison at Wakefield (11). He was described on the record as 69 years old, 5 foot 6 inches, with no education, a scar on each knee and varicose veins. Clearly labouring had taken its toll, and he would have been unlikely to be able to do labouring work.

The second offence in 1884, involved George being labelled a 'Rogue and Vagabond'. The offence of vagrancy (essentially being homeless) led to a three-month prison sentence at the age of 70 (12)

George fortunately survived prison, and in 1891 he lived in Leeds Workhouse. The record clarified his marital status as single, never married, and his place of birth as 'HendlyWoodly' which I assume to mean Alwoodley' (13).

George died in the Union Infirmary in 1892, aged 78 (14). He was buried on 22 October that year in Beckett Street Cemetery Leeds (15)

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