



## The Fairfaxes, of Hurst.

*By Rev. C. W. Penny, M.A.*



IN the village of Hurst, just opposite the south porch of the venerable church, and separated only by the road from the churchyard, is a picturesque, time-worn, red-brick building of two storeys, well known as The Almshouse, or Barker's Hospital. Over the front door, upon a white stone, under some carved scroll work, now much weather worn, and a shield which probably once displayed the Barker coat-of-arms, is cut the following inscription :—

This Hospitall for the  
Maintenance of Eight Poor Persons,  
Each at 6d Pr. Diem for ever, was  
Erected and Founded in ye Year, 1664,  
At the sole Charge of  
WILLIAM BARKER,  
of Hurst, in the County of  
Wilts, Esqr.,

Who dyed on ye 25 of March, 1685,  
And lyes buried in the South Chancell of this Parish.

Henry Fairfax, Esq., His Nephew & Heire, M.P.

In which inscription it may perhaps be well to remark that the last two letters stand for "monumentum posuit," that is, "erected this memorial."

Who was Henry Fairfax, of Hurst?

In his charming little guide-book—"A Few Words about Hurst"—the late Vicar of Hurst, the Rev. Archibald Cameron, has fallen into an error as to the identity of Henry Fairfax, of Hurst. He says (p. 37): "The only surviving daughter, and consequently the heiress of Henry Barker, whose tomb we have described, was married to Henry Fairfax, second son of Lord Fairfax, the great leader of the Parliamentary Army, second only to Cromwell himself." And Mr. Cameron goes on to moralise upon the varied and

distracted feelings, by which the little village of Hurst must have been agitated in those stormy days, with the Fairfaxes of Hurst Lodge at one end and the Windebanks of Haines Hill at the other end—families at the opposite poles of the political compass, while Reading was being besieged by the Parliament, and the first and second battles of Newbury were being fought in our own county, “besides the more distant but bloodier battles of Marston Moor and Naseby, in which Lord Fairfax was a leader, and in the first of which he was wounded.”

No doubt the village of Hurst in those troubled times was divided, like the rest of England, between Cavaliers and Roundheads, who sided with King or Parliament. But it is at least doubtful whether these Fairfaxes belonged to the latter faction. Unhappily for Mr. Cameron's suggestion, Thomas, the third Baron Fairfax, the ‘Great Lord Fairfax,’ as he is sometimes called, the great Parliamentary General, had no son. He left an only daughter, Mary, who married George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, the dissolute and profligate heir of the Favourite of the two first Stewart kings. And therefore Frances Barker could not have been his daughter-in-law.

Henry Fairfax, who married Frances Barker and inherited Hurst Lodge in right of his wife, was the father of the Henry Fairfax, who erected the memorial stone over the front door of William Barker's Almshouse. He was buried at the east end of the north aisle of Hurst Church, and the monumental slab which covered his grave may still be seen there.

Hurst Church is no exception to most of the churches of this district. It has been restored and so darkened by modern stained glass that it is almost impossible, except on a very fine, sunny forenoon, to read an inscribed stone, especially if it is set in the floor. Even then it is necessary to kneel down and bring the eye quite close to the slab, and sometimes even to feel the letters, so bad is the light in that particular corner. The difficulty in this case was increased by a huge, unsightly, deal painted case, too heavy to be shifted, which at present stands upon the slab and effectually conceals from view the initial words of each line of the inscription. By the aid of Ashmole's *Antiquities of Berks*, who, however, is not always to be trusted, I am able to give the following epitaph:—

Here lyeth the body of Henry Fairfax,  
Second Sonne of Thomas Viscovt  
Fairfax, of Emely, in Ireland, who married

Frances only daughter of Henry  
 Barker, of Hurst, Esq: by whome hee  
 Had two Sonnes and one Daughter, (vix.) (sic)  
 Henry, John and Frances. Hee dyed  
 The 4th day of Jvly, Ann<sup>o</sup>. Dni., 1650.  
 Being the 50th Yeare of his Age.

I am not sure of one word in the above inscription. Ashmole gives 'Viscount Fairfax, of *Ernely*'; Burke in his *Landed Gentry* gives '*of Elmley*.' I, owing to the above-mentioned deal case, could only read the last two letters '—ly.' I see there is a village in Yorkshire named 'Elmley or Emley'; and there is the well-known Irish See of *Emly*, in Ireland, of which Archbishop Magee was once Dean, but which was suppressed in 1872. I believe, however, that it will be found that it was from the Irish village that Viscount Fairfax took his title.

At the top of this epitaph is sculptured a very elaborate coat-of-arms for Henry Fairfax himself; at the foot is his wife's lozenge-shaped scutcheon. The tinctures of course must be sought for elsewhere; but, as near as I could make it out, the following is the coat of the husband. Quarterly of eight: 1, Three Bars gemelles, surmounted by a lion rampant (Fairfax); 2, A Chevron between three mules' heads, erased; 3, Barry of eight, on a canton a Cross Patonce; 4, A Cross; 5, A Bend; 6, A Bend; 7, A Chevron between three martlets; 8, Fairfax, as before, with a crescent for difference. In Ashmole's time there was fastened to the wall above an atchievment with nearly the same coat-of-arms emblazoned upon it, from which, if necessary, some of the tinctures may be learned.

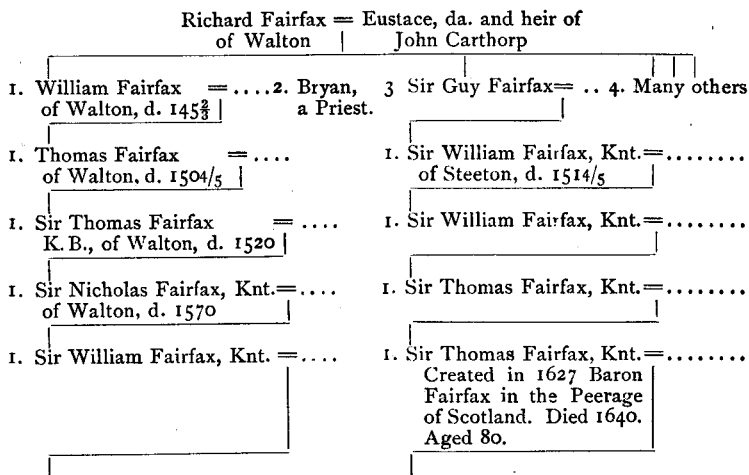
At the foot of the epitaph is the wife's coat, viz.: Fairfax, as above, with a crescent for difference impaling Barker. This last coat is: Quarterly—1 and 4, Per chevron nebulée, or. and sa. a lion rampant, counterchanged; 2 and 3, Per fess, sa. and arg., three tilting spears erect, counterchanged, with a crescent at the central point for a cadency.

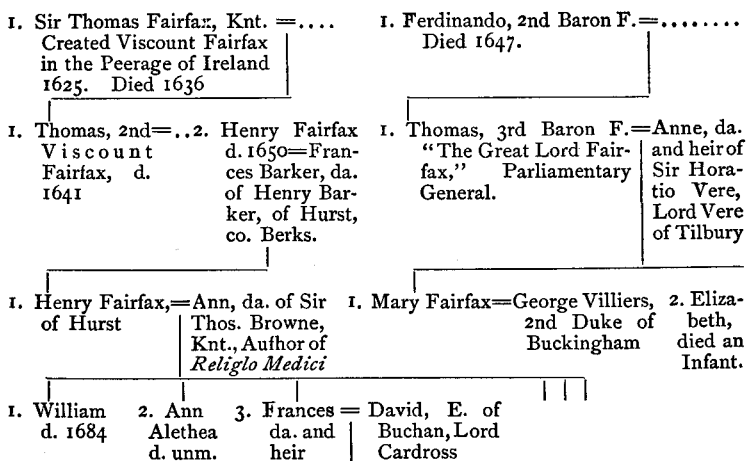
It will be seen, therefore, that while the first Henry Fairfax of Hurst was indeed the second son of a Thomas, Lord Fairfax, he was not the son of the Parliamentary General. His father was the *first* Viscount Fairfax, of Elmley or Emely, in the peerage of Ireland; whereas the 'Great Lord Fairfax,' also Thomas, was the *third* Baron Fairfax, of Cameron, in the peerage of Scotland, a totally distinct creation.

At this time the families were quite distinct. The Fairfaxes of Hurst belonged to the senior branch, which for centuries was seated at Walton, near Thorpach, and overlooking the valley of the Wharfe, whence the scions of this grand old family went forth to seek their fortune at Court and in camp. But during the wars of the Roses, a younger son, Sir Guy Fairfax, the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, founded the more famous junior branch. And we must go back to a date early in the 15th century to find the common ancestor of the two branches of the Fairfax family. The subjoined pedigree, which I have compiled partly from *Douglas's Peerage of Scotland* and partly from *Burke's Landed Gentry*, will make clear how distant was the relationship between the two Lords Fairfax.

There is another error in Mr. Cameron's little book which I should like to correct in passing. He says (p. 37): "There is nothing to shew whether Henry Fairfax actually served in the Rebel Army. He appears to have lived here (*i.e.*, at Hurst) at least the latter part of his life; probably from the death of his father-in-law in 1651; and he was buried here, as the inscription on his tomb states, in 1656." Mr. Cameron has misread the date of his death, which is 1650—not 1656, on the tomb; and therefore his father-in-law, Henry Barker, who died on the 27th June, 1651, survived him nearly twelve months.

### FAIRFAX PEDIGREE.





It will be seen from the foregoing pedigree how short was the connection of the family of Fairfax with Hurst, very little more than forty years. An instance which goes to support the truth of the common saying that the land in Berks is always changing its owners.

Mr. Cameron also speculates whether Henry Fairfax the elder "actually served in the Rebel Army." Had he been a son of the Parliamentary General, no doubt he would have accompanied his father, the Great Lord Fairfax, in his campaigns against the King. But there is nothing to shew that the Fairfaxes of Hurst were Roundheads. Nothing was more common in those days than for members of the same family to take different sides, and many estates escaped sequestration by that means. The Nevills of Billingbear, for example, did so. The eldest son, Richard, was for the King, while his younger brother Henry was a Rebel. And if alliances go for anything, Henry Fairfax's elder son—also Henry Fairfax, he of the memorial stone of Barker's Hospital—married into a staunch Royalist family. His wife was Ann, daughter of Sir Thomas Browne, Kt., the famous physician and well-known author of the *Religio Medici*. Further, their only surviving daughter, Frances, also married a Royalist. Her husband David, Earl of Buchan, was grandson of the single Scotch peer who voted against the surrender of Charles I. to the English army at Newcastle, in 1646. It is not improbable, therefore, that the Fairfaxes of Hurst were Royalists.

There is no monument to Henry Fairfax the younger in Hurst Church, and he was still living when Ashmole visited it. For, in

recording the coat-of-arms "in the great parlour window of the house where Mr. Lewis lives," he remarks that it "did belong to the family of Barker, and came by inheritance from them to Mr. Fairfax, the present owner thereof."

William Fairfax, the only surviving male representative of the third generation, died, as appears from the register,\* in his 4th year. There is a small tablet to his memory against the east wall of the north aisle with the following touching epitaph, under the Fairfax coat-of-arms, sculptured in white marble :—

Dedicated to ye Memory of  
WILLIAM FAIRFAX,  
Son to Henry Fairfax Esq. by Ann  
His Wife Daughter to S<sup>r</sup> Thomas  
Browne, K<sup>t</sup>. Who Dyed  
Jvly ye 27th 1684.

This little silent gloomy monument  
Contains all that was sweet and innocent.  
The softest prattler that ere found a tongue,  
His voice was music, and his words a song  
Which now each listening angel smiling hears :—  
Such gentle harmony composed the spheres :—  
Fair as young Cherubins, soft and kind,  
And though translated, could not be refined.  
The seventh dear pledge the nuptial joys had given,  
Toiled here with play, retired to rest in Heaven,  
Where they, the shining Host of Angels, file,  
Spread their gay wings before the throne, and smile.

In the same grave resteth also  
Ann Alethea their daughter.

The grave in question is close by, in the eastern end of the north aisle, and marked by a small white stone, which is thus inscribed :—

Under  
This Stone Lyeth Interred  
Two deare departed  
Children, William and  
Ann Alethea Fairfax,  
1684.

Not far from this, and quite close to the east wall beneath the window, is a long narrow white grave-stone with an inscription that has puzzled me much, and I am quite unable to suggest any explanation which will bring the dates into harmony with what I have written above. At the top of the stone is the Fairfax coat, with a crescent for difference; at the foot, a Death's-head and cross-bones; on either side an hour-glass, and in the space between, this epitaph:—

Here resteth Fran :  
Ye Granchild of  
Henry Fairfax, of  
Burlington, in ye  
County of Yorke, Esqr.,  
By his eldest Son,

Henry & Ann his  
Wife, Daug<sup>r</sup> to S<sup>r</sup>  
Thom<sup>s</sup> Browne of  
Norwich, K<sup>t</sup>, Who  
Dyed Sep<sup>thr</sup> ye 15<sup>th</sup>  
1678.

Ætatis Suæ 56.

To begin with was Fran., a son or a daughter? Francis or Frances? The word 'grandchild' may be of either gender. We know that little William Fairfax was the 'seventh dear pledge,' and therefore had other brothers and sisters: and that one sister Frances survived him, became sole heiress of the property, and married in 1697 David, fourth Lord Cardross, and eventually eighth Earl of Buchan; and thus became grandmother to Thomas, Lord Erskine, Lord Chancellor of England in the reign of George III. But in 1678 little William Fairfax was not yet born. And it is impossible that he could have had an elder brother or sister by the same father and mother, who died two years before his birth at the age of 56. Further, if this Fran. Fairfax was 56 in 1678, he (or she) was born in 1622; but it is clear from his epitaph that Henry Fairfax, the elder, in 1622 was only 21 years of age, and could not be then a grandfather. I leave it therefore as an unsolved mystery, which can only be explained by a reference to the Registers of Hurst.

Owing to the distance of Scotland from Hurst, the Countess of Buchan soon after her marriage caused the property to be sold to the ancestor of the Palmer family, in whose possession, I believe, it still remains. And thus the Fairfaxes disappeared for good from Hurst, after a sojourn of less than fifty years.