

George Mason

George Mason was born in Avon Dassett, Warwickshire, around 1862.

In the 1871 Census, he was 9 years old and lived in the village with his father John Mason (aged 41, agricultural labourer, born Avon Dassett), his mother Sarah Mason (aged 34, from Little Lowford) and his siblings Ann, Joseph and Louisa.

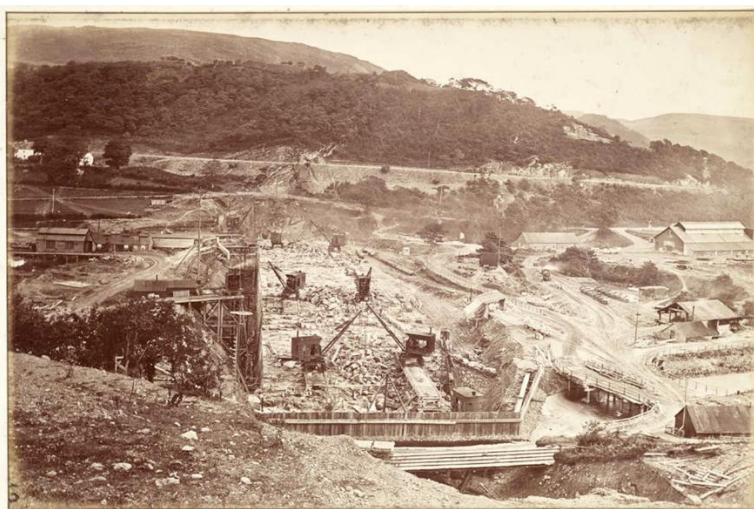
In the 1881 Census, he was 19, working as an agricultural labourer and living at Avon Dassett with his parents and his younger siblings Joseph, Thomas, Ernest, Emily, John and Anne.

By 1885, George had moved to mid Wales. He was working as a labourer at the Lake Vyrnwy waterworks. In 1880, an Act of Parliament had granted Liverpool Corporation permission to construct a dam across the river Vyrnwy to create a reservoir, which would be a water supply for the city. This was the first large stone dam in the UK.

This photo shows the upper Vyrnwy valley prior to the dam. The river Vyrnwy flowed past corn fields.



Work on the dam started soon after 1880.



There were cottages, farmsteads and a mansion in the upper Vyrnwy valley, as well as the old village of Llanwddyn, which had a church, chapels, 3 pubs and a school, as well as more than 30 dwellings where a thriving rural community lived. The valley was rich in traditions. All properties were subject to a compulsory purchase by Liverpool Corporation.

George Mason would have visited the village many times. The following photos show the village before and after demolition. It was an “estate” village, renowned for its fishing, owned mostly by the Earl of Powis.

In Church Street, St John’s church was to the left and the Powis Arms to the right.



Church Street



In Pontdolwenith Lane, the Cross Guns inn is on the left and the Post Office is on the right. In the background (right hand photo) the lake had already started filling up after partial demolition of buildings.



Pontdolwenith Lane

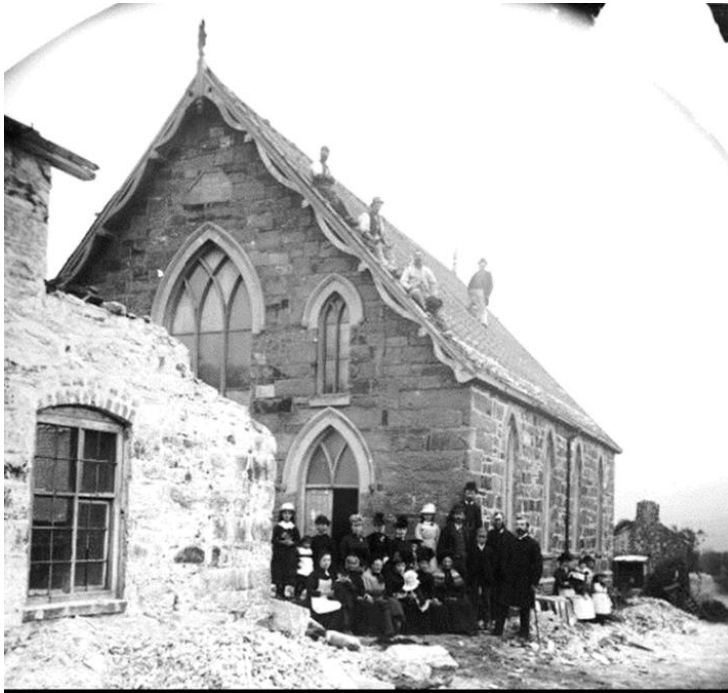


On Fishing Street, villagers posed for the photographer.



Fishing Street

In this photo, a group of villagers are standing in front of a chapel while workers remove slates from the roof of the chapel prior to demolition.



All the stone for the dam was quarried in the valley.



Some workers lived locally, while others moved there for work, like George Mason.

He lived at 18 Quarry Huts. There are no photos of the wooden huts constructed at Vyrnwy, but it's highly likely that they were similar to those constructed 10 years later at Elan Valley (see below) where a dam was built to provide a water supply for Birmingham.



George Mason was injured by a tram waggon which accidentally ran over him. He died on 24th February 1885 at the works Hospital near the quarry. He was 23 years old.

On February 25th 1885, he was buried at the new Llanwddyn cemetery, which had replaced the old cemetery in the old village. His headstone has the following inscription:



"In loving memory of George, son of John
and Sarah Mason of Avon Dassett.
Accidentally killed at Llanwddyn Feb 24th
1885. Aged 23 years.

Watch therefore for ye know not in what
hour the Lord cometh. All ye that do
behold this stone, Oh! Think how quickly I
was gone. Death does not always warning
give. Therefore be careful how you live."

The broken footstone has his initials G.M.

In 1890, the workers built a monument to commemorate their fellow workers who had been killed or had died during the construction of the reservoir. The monument was built on the hill overlooking the dam. George Mason is one of the commemorated men, whose names are on the plaques at the base of the monument.



OBELISK
Erected by
their
fellow workmen

Name			Name		
1	Jos Evans	Killed Oct 9 1882	23	Henry Hall	Died May 30 1885
2	George Mason	Killed Feb 25 1885	24	David Jones	Died Jan 9 1886
3	John Williams	Killed Apr 11 1885	25	Frederick Roberts	Died Jan 30 1886
4	Ed Richards	Killed June 4 1885	26	David Morris	Died April 5 1886
5	Edward Williams	Killed Jun 19 1885	27	Sam Cliff	Died May 2 1886
6	David Pugh	Killed July 19 1885	28	TJ Davies	Died May 27 1886
7	Tho Waters	Killed July 10 1885	29	Wm Shepherd	Died June 11 1886
8	Ed Morris	Killed Set 17 1885	30	John Kennard	Died Jan 19 1887
9	David Jones	Killed Jan 23 1888	31	James Stewart	Died July 25 1887
10	Jas Pearson	Killed Jan 20 1889	32	George Griffiths	Died Sep 20 1887
11	Luke Madden	Died Mar 4 1882	33	Roger Owen	Died Feb 21 1888
12	John Dixon	Died May 30 1882	34	John Dickson	Died Feb 21 1888
13	Wm Nelson	Died May 30 1882	35	Geo Sturgess	Died Mar 19 1888
14	Owen Owen	Died Aug 13 1883	36	John Parry	Died Apr 19 1888
15	James Kirkpatrick	Died Set 29 1883	37	John Burgess	Died May 11 1888
16	William Jones	Died Feb 23 1884	38	Richard Pritchard	Died Jun 17 1888
17	Thomas Edwards	Died Mar 28 1884	39	David Evans	Died Oct 4 1888
18	Thos Davies	Died June 16 1884	40	John Roberts	Died July 19 1889
19	Alfd Anning	Died July 27 1884	41	Wm Mainwaring	Died Feb 20 1890
20	Lewis Hughes	Died Nov 25 1884	42	John Williams	Died Feb 23 1890
21	Geo Williams	Died April 10 1885	43	John Williams	Died Apr 7 1890
22	John James	Died May 5 1885	44	Henry Jones	Died Apr 27 1890

Lake Vyrnwy today continues to be a water supply for Liverpool. It is also a tourist attraction.



When water levels are very low at Lake Vyrnwy, ruins of the old village and other properties can be seen.

Historic photos from People's Collection Wales website

Gravestone and Obelisk photos by Carol Pearce

Lake Vyrnwy and dam today by Sean the Spook on Wikipedia