

GEORGE MISSEN JUNIOR (1873-1900)

George Missen Jnr (1873-1900) was a Footscray footballer who fell victim to appendicitis, highlighting the perils faced before the development of modern medicine.

George was raised in the Skelton Creek area as one of 14 children. His parents were George Missen Snr and his wife, Emily Maria nee Barton.

They were a farming family but also involved in hotels. George Sr was the licensee of the Rose and Crown Hotel at Rockbank on Ballarat Road in the 1870s. The family had emigrated from Suffolk, England, in the late 1850s.

George Jr's mother Emily died in 1889, some four years after the birth of her last child, Arthur Henry, leaving George Sr with several children still at home or attending school, while the older ones helped on the farm.

Apart from son Alfred who died soon after his birth in 1878, the family were all healthy until George Jr fell ill in late December 1900 at the age of 25. It was very hot summer that year and many people suffered from the heat.

George had been ill for about 10 days and was admitted to hospital for an operation to take out his appendix. The emergency operation on Christmas Day by Dr Honman and Dr Manly was deemed a success and for four days George seemed to improve. He was able to go home to his house in Watton Street, Werribee.

Then the hot weather, described as "fearful" in the local newspaper, set in and George's condition worsened. Before the advent of broad spectrum antibiotics, only careful nursing could help. In this case, although the nurses tried their hardest, George died of complications.

George Jr was well liked in the district. He played football for Footscray, and was a member of the Manchester Unity Oddfellows, a friendly society and not for profit lodge which helped raise money for the poor and provided mutual benefits such as payments to cover medical and funeral costs. His family would now have to make a claim on his fund.

He was buried in Werribee Cemetery where a large crowd attended his funeral.



Find out more

James, K.N. *Werribee: the first hundred years*, (1985)

Lewis, M.J. *Medicine in Colonial Australia, 1788-1900*, (2014)

Penrose, H. *Werribee Farm: a history, 1892-2000*, (2001)



DR JAN PENNEY BA, DIP ED, PHD

Jan is a professional historian who has worked across the fields of heritage, education and tourism. She has taught at several universities, including Monash University where she delivered the master of public history course. She is also a former Chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria. Jan was appointed to The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in 2010.



ABOUT FOOTPRINTS IN HISTORY

Footprints in history profiles individuals interred at GMCT's 19 cemeteries and memorial parks whose achievements, leadership and contributions to the community have shaped modern Australian society.