

Brief Biography: Samson Gilbert Daykin, 1886-1939

Samson Gilbert Daykin was born in Platts Common, near Barnsley, in 1886. His father, Noah, was a coal miner at Hoyland Silkstone Colliery and his mother's name was Annie. Gilbert (as he was known) was one of twelve children. His family moved to 13 William Street and then to 25 George Street, Worsbrough Bridge, before moving to Derbyshire in around 1900.

At the age of 13, Gilbert became a miner. He initially looked after pit ponies and ran errands. As an adult, Gilbert worked at Warsop Colliery. In 1910, he married Lillian Hayes and they had three children. It seems that around the time of his marriage, Gilbert experienced an overwhelming desire to paint. He painted pictures of the countryside surrounding the Welbeck estate near his home and underground mining scenes (see example below right).

Some of Gilbert's work was bought by the Staveley Coal and Iron Company, and his local Miners Welfare Committee offered him a bursary which enabled him to take a part-time course at Nottingham School of Art. Gilbert's work soon came to the attention of his local MP, the Hon. Malcolm MacDonald. MacDonald became a friend and supporter of Gilbert and arranged for his work to be shown in Worksop. The Duchess of Portland, of Welbeck Abbey, also supported Gilbert's artistic work. In 1931, she invited him to visit her at her London residence, enabling him to visit the galleries he had never been to before. This visit attracted the attention of the press and, on 3rd August 1931, Gilbert was pictured on the front page of the Daily Mirror wearing his flat cap.

Despite Gilbert's talent, and this brief brush with fame, he was never able to afford to give up mining and concentrate on his art, though he would have dearly loved to do so. He continued to paint frantically, pausing only in 1936 when his daughter, Irene, died after being knocked down by a car.

Having lived much of his life in fear of a mining accident, Gilbert died on 20th December 1939 when he and five colleagues were trapped by over 5,000 tons of rock-fall. Just one hour later and his last shift before Christmas would have finished.



Markham's Ponies by Gilbert Daykin (1928)