

Extracts from “Through Airedale from Goole to Malham” by Johnnie Gray (1891)

Kildwick

ALTHOUGH this ancient parish includes some populous townships, the old village of Kildwick itself contains barely a score habitations, and in point of population at any rate, remains much the same as in that remote day when Saxon yeomen called it Childeuic.

The Church is historically notable as one of the oldest foundations in England, being mentioned in Domesday, and was given with the Manor by the great landed family of Romille to the Priory of Embsay, afterwards Bolton.

The present edifice was built in Henry VIII's time. It is often called the Lang Kirk of Craven, from its being the longest church in the Deanery, as well as one of the longest in Yorkshire. Its length is 176 feet and width 48½ feet, just 4 feet larger each way than the church at Snaith. It was thoroughly restored in 1868 and the porch replaced in 1873. A west gallery erected in 1825, necessitated the removal of a splendid antique oak canopy to the font. This canopy was the gift of the Canons of Bolton, and having been cast aside was afterwards cut up and wrought into chairs and then sold by auction ! The Norman font luckily remains, and the gallery has been removed.

Before the restoration the present oak ceiling was covered with a flat plaster roof erected as a preventative against damp, caused by the old system of 'mossing'. Icicles in winter and rain in summer, dripping from the roof, cannot, to say the least, have promoted a pious ardour among the worshippers in the sacred edifice. Such items of expenditure, as 'stopping drops and sweeping snow out of church', are of frequent occurrence in the old parish accounts. At one time colonies of bats infested the recesses of the roof, and even yet are occasionally seen fluttering about their old haunts.

The interior contains a good deal of fine old carved oak, notably the Eltoft pew dated 1632, various memorial windows and tablets, and a magnificent recumbent monument in Hazlewood stone, of Sir Robert de Stiveton, who was interred here with great pomp in A.D. 1307, as appears by the contingent expenses in the Bolton Abbey cash book.

Kildwick, at no distant date, must have been a literal 'Back Woods', judging from the many sums paid for the destruction of beasts and birds of prey plaguing the district. In no parish accounts in the dale have we seen more of such entries. From 1669, when the churchwardens' accounts begin, for nearly a century afterwards, there are hundreds of entries of small amounts disbursed for the slaughter of foxes, badgers, otters, fougarts, hedgehogs, kites, hawks, &c., and in 1673 we find 3s. 10d. awarded to three persons for 150 crows' heads ! Appended are a few suggestive extracts from these old parish books:

- A.D. 1746. Sept 1. To Thos. Witherop, the Sexton, for his first half-year's wages for looking to the clock and bells, and ringing night and morn 10s. To same for first half-year's wages for Whipping the Dogs 2s. 6d. To same for weeding the church steps the whole year 1s... Paid for a cart load of turf and leading 10d.

- A.D. 1746. Nov. 5th. Paid to the Ringers for Ringing on Oct. 9th, being the Thanksgiving Day after the Rebellion is. 6d.
- 1746-7. Jan. 15. To Joshua Hill for mossaing and pointing the school 5s. 3d.

In 1673 we find 1s. is paid for an "houre glass", an instrument by which the parson timed his sermon before the days of pocket watches.

We also find that the old enactment of 1531, for publicly whipping vagrants naked in the street was in full force here up to the Stuart period. The stocks preserved near the entrance to the church were put in use so recently as 1860. But if there have been reprobates, we have only to turn to the churchyard for many a tale of local worth and virtue.

Mark the concentrated goodness implied in this lament of a dearly-beloved spouse:

"She was,—but I forbear to tell you what, Think what a wife should be and she was that."

Very different from the following, observed elsewhere:

"Here lies my wife, poor Molly, let her lie. She finds repose at last, and so do I."

But a good Jack, 'tis said truly, makes a good Jill, and this may lie at the root of both epitaphs.

Kildwick Hall, the seat of John Brigg, Esq., C.C., J.P., is a picturesque old Elizabethan manor-house, added to from time to time, and contains many trophies of the Civil Wars. In 1728, during the occupancy of Haworth Currer, lord of the manor, a box containing gold medals of the time of Charles I., was accidentally discovered whilst digging in an adjoining outhouse. They were of the value of £150.

The village and manor of Kildwick were purchased by the Currers over three centuries ago, and are still owned by their lineal descendant, Sir Mathew W. Wilson, Bart., of Eshton Hall. Their pedigree is given in Dr. Whitaker's History of Craven. Kildwick Grange, (p. 205),

Kildwick Grange, erected by the monks of Bolton who were proprietors of the church and manor up to the Dissolution, wears a truly captivating look of genuine antiquity. It has a curious stone balconied portal, and its cosy interior appears to have undergone but little change since the days of its original owners. One of the upper rooms has an ornamental plaster ceiling, and has evidently been used as a private chapel. There are indications of a small altar, and on the outer wall is a cupboard which has apparently been used for the vestments. The panellings are of black oak, and the banister of the same material has at its foot the hinges of a door or gate which once closed the staircase. The house (in two parts) is tastefully cared for, and is in the occupation of Mrs. Smith and the Misses Weatherhead.

Not the least interesting local monument of antiquity is the Aire Bridge at Kildwick. An expenditure of £21 12s. 9d. was made in the probable rebuilding of it by the Canons of Bolton in 1305. It is the oldest bridge over the Aire of which we have any written record ; reference is made to one at Bingley a few years later, (an agreement between the monasteries of Drax and Rievaulx) in 1312.

The structure at Kildwick consists of two pointed and two rounded arches, and was originally only about half its present width, as may be seen by an examination of the piers underneath it. The widening took place in 1780, when the four east arches were all made round. But glancing up at the church clock we are warned to "Redeem the time,".

BUSES run between Kildwick and Cowling (Bay Horse Inn) about four times daily, meeting the trains. On Sundays from Cowling 8-55 a.m. and 7-50 p.m.; from Kildwick 9-15 a.m. and 8-10 p.m. Fare 3d. each way.

Farnhill

Farnhill (pop. 561).

After the Conquest this became a mesne manor in the parish of Kildwick, and the manor house, now Farnhill Hall, probably occupies its original site. The last mention of the first lords discovered by Dr. Whitaker occurs in an award made in 1318 by the Canons of Bolton to Willm. de Fernhill, for a destructive raid upon his property by the Scots, after their triumph at Bannockburn. Later than this, however, a John de Fernhill was witness to a deed dated at Glusburn, 14th Edward III. (A.D. 1340); and in the 40th Edward III. the family of Coppley appears, from whom early in the next century the Eltofts acquired the manor and retained possession until 1636, when it was bought by the Currers. Its subsequent transmission is well-known.

Farnhill Hall (F. E. Slingsby, Esq.) with its ivied front and towers standing amid a framework of ancestral trees, is an interesting feature in the view from the railway between Kildwick and Cononley. Remembrances of the marauding Scots probably led to its erection as a seat of defence, the outer walls having an average thickness of six feet, and in some places are over eight feet thick. The cellars are hewn out of the solid rock, and from which there is a passage (now blocked) that is said to have communicated with Royd House on the opposite side of the valley.

The interior dwelling appears well preserved, and there is a look of solidity and airiness about the rooms, which are large and lofty for a building so conspicuously ancient.

On an outbuilding appear the letters and date EE 1560 AE., the initials of Edm. Eltoft and his wife. In 1590 we find Edward Walmysley, gent., and Robert Walmysley, gent., obtained from Edmond Eltoft, Esq., and Thomas Eltoft, his son and heir, conjointly with four others, "Ten messuages with lands at Farnhill, to be held at an annual rent of £20, payable on the 15th day next following the feast of St. Martin the Bishop, and the 15th day next following the feast of Pentecoste, in equal portions at the south porch of the parish church or chapel of Cliderowe, in the co. Lancaster". The Eltofts were a very wealthy family having extensive possessions in Airedale and elsewhere.

The tourist may now ascend Farnhill Crag to the Jubilee Cairn by a path past some houses over the moor. The Cairn (800 ft.) is 12 ft. high and surmounted by a stone cross bearing the initials VR. and the insignia of the Union, a rose, shamrock, and thistle. The view is one of the best in upper Airedale, embracing northwards the Malham moors with Gordale Crag, Ryeloaf, Ingleborough, Norton Tower on Rylstone Fell, the three-peaked Flasby Fell, and the chimneys at Gargrave.