

Farnhill Hall

by Christopher Scott

The following notes on Farnhill Hall may, I hope, be of interest to your correspondent. Little seems to be known about it, as from a dozen or so books in an exceptionally well-stocked library, containing a large percentage of Yorkshire histories, the following is all I am able to find.

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Croft House, Skipton-in-Craven

The hamlet of Farnhill is mentioned in Domesday as a manor. Farnhill Hal, as we now see it, probably stands on the identical site occupied by the old Manor House. Kirkby's Inquest (A.D. 1284) shows that most of the land around Kildwick, including presumably Farnhill, was in the hands of the Prior and Convent of Bolton.

It is generally supposed that the hall was originally built as a fortified house and watch-tower against the Scotch (*sic*) marauders, who visited Craven, on plunder intent, right through the Middle Ages. It was, in other words, what is technically known as "Border Peal". It is obvious that the Hall was constructed for some warlike purpose, from the fact that its outer walls are, in places, from 6 to 8 feet thick. The cellars are hewn out of the solid rock on which it is built, and, in their day, probably served as dungeons. Tradition says that an underground passage, now blocked up, led from one of these cellars to Royd House, on the other side of the river. This does not seem likely to be true, however, as the distance is considerable and one cannot help thinking that if the passage existed it would have been discovered during the construction of the canal and railway. I might mention in passing that Royd House is not without interest, for it was honoured (?) during the siege of Skipton by visits from Oliver Cromwell, who now and again spent a night there. Some Cromwellian relics, including a saddle, are still preserved in the house.

To return to Farnhill Hall, on one of the out-buildings the date 1560 appears between the initials EE and AE thus:

EE 1560 AE

These initials stood for Edmund Eltoft and his wife [*the following handwritten, v. faintly*: Agnes daughter of ???? Fairfax] who were the owners at that date.