

Notes on Farnhill, by George Bottomley

In the early years of the 20th century, George Bottomley was Farnhill's representative on Skipton Rural District Council. In 1912 he moved into the newly-built house "High Croft" close to Moor Gate on Bradley Lane.

In 1950 he wrote some "Notes on Farnhill" which he addressed to "Mary". A photocopy of these "Notes" was found amongst the papers of the recently deceased Ruth Ward, and was given to the History Group by her step-daughter. They are transcribed, below, without editorial.

George Bottomley died in 1953, at the age of 84.

Farnhill

is a township in the ancient parish of Kildwick and in the W.R. of York, 3 miles South of Skipton. The Leeds & Liverpool Canal passes through the township, which is pleasantly situated on the East-side of Airedale. Farnhill Hall, the principle residence, is a mansion of very ancient date. The present tenant and owner is Lord of the Manor.

The area is 543 statute acres and the population at last census 657.

The Institute in the village was entirely furnished by the family of the late Sir John Brigg of Kildwick Hall and opened in 1911, and in 1921 was handed to the village by a Deed of Gift and trustees appointed. It is the village's social centre and has a reading room, games room, billiard table, large assembly room and the usual offices. There is a tennis court, also a gift of the donors of the Institute in connection with it, and a Library of 200 volumes, and is also centre for the West Riding County Council Circulating Library.

The Methodists have a Chapel and Sunday School and a resident Minister.

The Independent Order of Oddfellows, M.U. Loyal Staincliffe Lodge No. 221 meets at the Oddfellows Hall, the property of the Society, alternate Fridays.

Kildwick (via) is its Post Office (Keighley).

There are two Mills in the township both in the worsted trade, and one of them is working a "night shift".

Many years ago Farnhill was famous for its stone quarries, especially the "Hardacre" quarry. Most of the stone for Dewhirst's Mill at Skipton was from there and was dressed at the quarry and sent by Canal to Skipton. The Low Moor quarry is available to all Farnhill Freeholders.

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which is (or used to be) a great part of the life of the village of Farnhill, was opened to the public on the 8th day of April 1773 – the 1st section completed, between Bingley and Skipton. It is recorded that in the “Leeds Intelligencer” 13th April 1773 “that part of the Grand Canal from Bingley to Skipton was opened, and two boats laden with Coal arrived at Skipton which was sold at half the price they have hitherto given for that most necessary convenience of life, and on which occasion the Bells were set ringing at Skipton, Bonfires illuminated and other demonstrations of Joy.”

On this length of canal it intersects the old road at Farnhill at the aqueduct known as the “Culvert” and where the old road burrows under the canal by a long diagonal tunnel with a deep cutting.

Farnhill Stone Bridge was built to replace a swing bridge and commenced on the 20 Sept 1839 and completed 1871 and cost £627-2-7 which was contributed to by Lord Thanet £50, Richard Currer £50, Mr. Fox £25, Rev. Perrin Vicar of Kildwick £10, and the balance by the Canal Company.

Farnhill is on the Old Roman Road from Ilkley to Ribchester long before the road from Kildwick Church to Snaygill was made 1786. The Old Road came from Silsden and down the White Gate, and was sufficiently important to have a milestone (still there) giving the distances to Otley, Skipton and Keighley.

St. Helen’s Well in High Farnhill, now known as Spout well is very old, and mentioned in ancient history, and is near to the village “Pin Fold”, and to the lovely Sycamore Tree at “Twig Nook” planted 134 years ago last October 1816.

Farnhill is a rich farming area with luscious meadows and producing much milk and beef. Chicken breeding and Poultry rearing is a very important occupation all the year round.

Farnhill Moor and on the Old Road to Hamblethorp with its slopes and crags and to the old coaching house once a public house. The store housing steps were only removed to Farnhill Hall about 30 years ago. It was once a possession of the Knights Hospitallers and the St. John’s Cross is still there.

Farnhill Pinnacle was rebuilt by the men and boys of Farnhill to commemorate Her Majesty Queen Victoria’s year of Jubilee.

Sire Bank Farm on the high moor is a beautiful nesting place for Curlews, Redshanks and Pewits and used to be a good and safe skating area, and a wonderful breeding ground for Grouse. Farnhill Wood is a safe home for Owls, Weasels, Rabbits.

To we, in Farnhill, surely the Canal has left a blot which will be for ever here but when you get to White Gate and view the Canal at Milking Hill Bridge on a glorious spring day, or on a clear frosty afternoon in winter, and see the setting sun above "Lingstead" reflected in the water, or take a boat trip in Summer to "Gill Grange" or you get in touch with a "Bargee" and step aboard a boat at "Bank Newton" on its meandering course through the meadows of Marton, or a day of exhilarating skating on the majestic reservoir at Foulridge, you will feel there are many things for you to appreciate and to be grateful for.

GB

Dear Mary,

I hope the enclosed few notes of Farnhill History will help you. It has been a great pleasure to me to search what I thought would be of interest and you might retain them for future use.

With my love and kindly thoughts
faithfully yours

George Bottomley