

When the milk came by donkey

Before milk came in plastic containers from supermarkets, even before it came in glass bottles, the milkman would deliver it to your door by horse-and-cart and dispense it, directly from a churn, using a milk ladle.

But what if you were a milkman in a small village, with narrow streets, where a slow-moving horse and cart might cause problems ?



The photograph shows George Holliday, who was the Farnhill milkman in the early years of the 20th century, and his donkey, Jenny.

Jenny was a clever donkey, who knew the milk-round as well as George did. If they came to a door which was closed, she would try to lift the latch with her nose. Failing that, she would knock on the door with her hoof until it was opened. For which trouble she expected a bun as reward. She was only prevented from walking straight into the house by the width of the churns she carried.

Mr. Holliday obtained his milk from a Mr. Jonas Laycock of Prospect Farm, Kildwick, and sold it at 2½d a pint in summer and 3d a pint in winter (12d = 5p). On Wednesdays and Thursdays, which were regular baking days, Jenny would always have to carry an extra gallon or two.

The photograph shown above was taken near the top of the Arbour and was frequently included in the magic lantern shows put on by the Methodist Church. If Mr. Holliday was present, he would always explain to the audience that he was “the one with the leggings on”.

Below, a picture of another “milk donkey”.



This donkey is from an earlier generation to Jenny. In their one of their books of local photographs and postcards, Whitaker and Wood record that this donkey belonged to Ben Smith, who farmed at Kildwick Grange at the end of the nineteenth century.

Here’s another picture (of the same donkey ?)



This was taken outside Priest Bank Cottage, at the top of Priest Bank Road.

Acknowledgements

This piece was derived from an undated and unsourced newspaper cutting included in the Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group archive. The original article records that George Holliday was, at that time, living in Crosshills and was aged 90. Also, that the photograph (shown on page 1) had been loaned by a Miss M. Moore of Mary Street.