

Earby Through 60 Years

FAMILIES WHO SETTLED IN PLEASANT WAYS

A Look Round West Craven Beauty Spots.

(by John Hartley) 24 June 1938

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said
This is my own, my native land.”

The return of the long warm, sunny days of summer suggest a suitable time for an imaginary excursion around the countryside of our "village-cum-town."

In some respects the geographical situation of Earby is distinctly admirable. It nestles in a hollow in the Pennine Range, and the neighbourhood has a worthy aspect from every point of view.

It is almost entirely surrounded by hills of varying height, the greatest summit being "Pinhaw," on the eastern side, which is perhaps best seen to advantage from the opposite side of the valley, especially from the slopes of White Moor in the west. Bleara Moor Kelbrook Moor, both on the eastern side, rise to a height of nearly 1,000 feet, while "Pinhaw" is slightly over that figure. A very fine view of "Pinhaw" is observable from the School Lane in Earby valley, which has the added effect of appearing to bring the eminence into closer range.

On the western side, the White Moor merges into "Weets Hill," which is higher than "Pinhaw," and is a closer neighbour to Barnoldswick. Viewed from "High Crofts, ("Hee Crofts"), White Moor is an attractive sight on a fine morning in summertime, with the whitewashed fronts of the farmhouses and the cottages gleaming in the distance.

Another hill on the western side is notable for its circular shape, "Swillber," which is centred between Barnoldswick, Earby and Thornton, and the view on all sides is very fascinating.

All the roads leading out of Earby have an upward gradient, about which some of our neighbours are fond of joking, as they taunt us about Earby being in a "hoil" but most of the houses are on higher ground, and on the eastern slopes of the Valley.

The Mount

Descending into the Earby valley from the slopes of "Pinhaw" on the Elslack side, there is a fine, commodious house, with an adjoining cottage, which is called "The Mount." This was formerly used as a summer residence by the Wilkinson family, who resided in Scotland, and belonged to the Thornton "fence End" estate, and who possessed the manorial rights of the district.

A short distance below the residence, there was formerly a fine plantation, about three quarters of a mile in length, known as Thornton Wood. This wood was cut down about a dozen years ago. "The Mount" premises are now in the occupation of Mr, and Mrs. James Green, and other members of the family, and they are a very popular resort for visitors and "picnic-parties."

All along the breast of the hill there is a footpath leading from Earby to Elslack moor-side, and it is no exaggeration to claim that from this vantage point one of the finest views of the English country-side may be observed. On the right are Rylstone Fell, Sharphaw, and the woods, surrounding Eshton Hall. Malham Cove is easily discernible, and the Pennine giants, Whernside and Ingleboro, stand out in their unchallenged glory. Peny-ghent is hidden from view by the "Rye Loaf," above Airton, but the crags above Settle furnish another attractive feature of mountain scenery. Almost the whole range of the Bowland Fells are within the line of vision before they dip down into the shores of Morecambe Bay, and in the west, towering over the summit of White Moor, is Pendle Hill, the landscape glory of Lancashire.

Within nearer distance is the upper valley of the River Aire, and the middle portion of the valley of the Ribble. In the foreground is a charming picture of the ancient and beautiful village of Thornton-in-Craven, in a landscape setting, which is a thrilling delight to all beholders.

At the foot of the hillside there is a finely-placed farmhouse, called "Booth House," for a long time occupied by James Brown, followed by his son, Aaron, and now in the possession of Lewis Wilkinson. The old lanes, now overgrown, (which were in use before the opening of the turn-pike road), leading from the farm to the roads on the hillside, are very beautiful, and a convenient footpath runs alongside.

Old Bobbin Mill

Close to Booth House, a little below is Booth Bridge Farm and cottages, and, the ruins of the old bobbin mill, Which 50 years ago was quite a hive of industry. The farm and the mill were in the possession of two brothers, Vandeluer and James Wilkinson, and the mill was run by their families, assisted by a few workers from Earby, usually "Top o't towners," where Mr. Vandeluer lived.

The family was a large one, and of exceptional culture. The eldest boy, Henry, after a short career as a schoolmaster, became H.M. Inspector, under the Board of Education.

The father and his son, Herbert, were accomplished violinists, and Herbert often, appeared on the concert platform in his earlier years. Jack and Charlie belonged to the Village Brass Band in its palmy days and Jack was a vocalist of repute.

Owing to changing commercial conditions, the business was transferred to Heysham, where it has continued to prosper, and it is now in the charge of the younger members of the family and their children.

Mr. Henry Wilkinson, is living in retirement at Didsbury. Mr. Henry Wilkinson, senr., lived at Booth Bridge House. His son, Henry, resides at Southport.

Another road into Earby branches off the Skipton to Colne moorland road above Lothersdale, opposite the Raygill Limestone Works, and in former times it was a well-used road. The first farm alongside the road is called "the Dodgesons," and when the Allotment Act was passed the farm was allocated to the living of St. Mary-le-Gill, Barnoldswick

Just 50 years ago, when the Vicar at Barnoldswick (Rev. John Woods) was having troublesome times with his parishioners, he could not get a tenant for his Earby farm, and he, with other three men, came over, all on horseback, to cut the hay and continue the harvesting operations. Nearer the village, on the right, is a pleasantly placed farm, called Fiddling Clough," formerly occupied by Mr. Silvester Lowcock, and more recently by Mr. Richard Wilkinson.

Through this farmland is a beautiful ravine called by the same name as the farm, and the Earby, beck, the Eure, has its rise on the adjoining Wentworth Moor, and runs through the ravine.

On the opposite side of the stream are two farmhouses, Oak Slack and High Gate, which half a century ago were occupied by "Jerry" Aldersley and his son, Edward. Shortly after his marriage in 1883 to Miss Grace Hartley, daughter of Mr. Joseph Hartley, the head of a well-known Earby family, but who hailed from Carleton, Mr. Edward Aldersley sustained a sad bereavement in the sudden death of his wife. A few months before another sister, Lily, who was married to Mr. Henry Speak, passed away after a brief illness. I have never known our village community more sympathetically moved than it was by this tragic bereavement. Not long afterwards Mr.Ed. Aldersley, with his father, removed to Coates Hall, near Barnoldswick, where the family still resides. Mr. Joseph Holgate succeeded to the occupancy of Highgate.

Re-crossing to the southern side of the valley is a commodious farmhouse in a pleasant situation called "Marlfield," noted for a long tenancy by Mr. George Cowgill and his family, who have Elslack associations, and belong to the same stock, as the late Bishop Cowgill, Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds. Mr. Cowgill's sons have been renowned for their exceptional merit in the building profession, especially William, the eldest. He, along with his sons, erected several public buildings in the district, as well as some fine terraces of dwelling houses. Another son, Charles, became the landlord of the Tempest Arms, Elslack, and after his death the family continued the tenancy.

Mr. John Cowgill entered into the insurance business, and became an inspector. He has just recently passed his 90th birthday, and is in fairly good health. He resides in Rostletop Road, near the Cricket Field, and the chief delight of his venerable age is to take his place on the "grand stand" and in the company of old friends, to follow the play of the Earby lads with keen zest. His brother, James, about four years younger, well known as a grocer and cabinetmaker, shares the same interest in cricket, and is in regular attendance on the Earby field.

Brass Band Players

All the four brothers were at one time associated with the Earby Brass Band. William was a noted trombone player and he was a fine figure with his bushy beard and imposing presence. But he never could be persuaded to don a uniform. John familiarly called "Jack," gave almost a lifetime of invaluable service to the band, especially in training young players and copying out music in the various scores. In his earlier years he had a term of service with a military band. His son, Jim, is the present conductor of the Earby Band.

In recent years the farm has been occupied by Mr. Tom Proctor, and his son, Tom, is now in possession. At the entrance to the farm drive there are the ruins of Birch Hall, which was formerly the residence of the Wentworth family.

The beck course below "Fiddling Clough" leads into "Robert Clough," a beautiful glade which terminates at the Earby Waterfall, behind Glen Cottages, Mill. Brow Road.

The central cottage, with the adjoining land at the foot of the Glen, now belongs to Mrs. Brace Glazier, who has done much to beautify the entrance to the waterfall area.

The name of the "clough" is associated with the late Mr. Robert Greenwood, whose family have been yeomen farmers for many generations, and whose grandson, Robert, with his brother, Morris, still belong to Glen Farm. "Old Robert," as we called him 50 years ago, was a really quaint character, wonderfully shrewd, very pithy in speech, which was often turned to good-natured sarcasm.

After a long courtship to an equally quaint character, Margaret Wilkinson, who was known to everyone as "Peggy o' John o' Dick's," Robert made up his mind to marry. After obtaining Peggy's consent, they arranged to be married at Thornton Church, and on the appointed day Robert (who was the village carrier to Skipton) called at the house of the bride's father at the bottom of Stoneybank Road with his carrier's cart, and as he knocked at the door he exclaimed, "Ar' ta ready?" When she came out she took up her position behind the cart and walked behind it the one-and-a-half miles to the church. When the ceremony was over she entered the "conveyance" and took her rightful place by the side of her husband and went with him to the Skipton market.

They had one son, whose Christian name was Parker, and the father and the son went to the Methodist Chapel. Old Peggy went her own way to the Baptist Chapel. The father was the Sunday School superintendent for many years and the son became the secretary. After the Bracewells removed from Earby, Robert Greenwood was made president of the Liberal Association and presided at the public meetings which were frequently held at that time. He was a sturdy radical, and caused much merriment with his caustic and humorous comments on current political events. Parker inherited much of his father's breezy characteristics, and former members of the old Skipton Board of Guardians will recollect his novel style of oratory.

[To be continued next week].

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