

EARBY

OUR VILLAGE - V

OLD EARBY FAMILIES

THE WILKINSONS

Of old Earby families it may be safely asserted that the most numerous and distinguished are the Wilkinsons. But bearing this name there are several distinct groups, and the most prominent of these are "The Dick's."

Away back in the latter part of the eighteenth century there were four orphan boys, whose father was named Richard Wilkinson, and in early life they were taken charge of and brought up by their uncle, George Turner. The boys' names were John, Joseph, Tom and George, and they were known to everybody in the village as John o' Dick's, Jooa o'Dick's, Tom o'Dock's and George o'Dick's.

The two eldest, John and Joseph, married two sisters, Elizabeth (Betty) and Ann Wormwell. John was married very young, but he must have been enterprising and prosperous, for he took over the School House Farm when he started housekeeping, and he and his wife reared a family of fifteen children, all of whom were born at the School House, at the bottom of Stoney Bank Road, which is now occupied by Mrs. Watson, but no longer as a farmhouse. Nearly all the land formerly belonging to the School Farm has been utilised for building purposes and allotments.

The names of the children, with dates of birth are as follows:-

Henry Wilkinson,	January 16th 1816
Margaret Wilkinson,	December 11th 1817
Mary Wilkinson	December 31st 1819
Joseph Wilkinson	September 13th 1821
Wm. Turner Wilkinson	April 26th 1823
Ann Wilkinson	November 15th 1824
George Turner Wilkinson	October 17th 1826
James Wilkinson	July 23rd 1828
Jane Wilkinson	June 21st 1830
John Wormwell Wilkinson	January 28th 1832
Sarah Wilkinson	October 7th 1833
Hartley Wilkinson	October 7th 1835
Edmund Wilkinson	June 4th 1837
Arthur Wilkinson	April 20th 1839
Ellen Wilkinson	November 23rd 1840.

This good woman, Betty Wilkinson, not only managed her household well and did her duty to her children, but actually officiated as the local doctor and it was said of her that she was the best doctor for miles around. She mixed her own medicines too and insisted upon her-----with one exception, followed her to her grave when she passed away, and her name is treasured by all who remember her or have succeeded her.

Canon Morris and the Wilkinsons.

In his early days as Rector of the extensive parish of Thornton-in-Craven, the late Rev. Canon Morris had a most amusing experience which he never tired of relating. Coming into Earby one fine afternoon along the "causer" (causeway), between School Bridge and the bottom of Earby, he accosted a man known as "John o'Bett's," and asked him: "Can you tell me where John Wilkinson lives?" John o'Bett's, who was a "dreeapy" sort of talker, replied in a drawling manner which only an old Earbyite can fully appreciate - "Which John Wilkinson d' you mean - John o'Peggy's, John o'Phyllis's, John o'Nicky's, John o'Dick's, John o'Bessie's, John o' Bet's, or "Quart John?" (with emphasis on "Quart" which means quiet.")

Canon Morris told the Bishop of Ripon of his interesting experience on his next Episcopal visit, and the Bishop was so delighted that he exclaimed: "Say it over again and again until I can say it like you!"

Known to everybody in the village as "Dood," he is probably the best remembered son of John o'Dick's, because of his association with the "Penny Reading" entertainments which were so popular sixty years ago.

The old Baptist Chapel, at the bottom of "Grelpit" (Gravel Pit) was converted into a mechanics institution, and it was also a village assembly room. The Rev. Canon Morris occasionally presided at the "Penny Readings," and he used to say: "Now I am going to call upon my old friend "Dood" to give a reading. And what a picture "Dood" made. A corpulent farmer of medium height, with a ruddy weather-beaten face, holding his book in one hand and a candle in the other, reading sketches from the "Clock Almanac." He always read Yorkshire dialect pieces, and there wasn't a better dialect reader in the West Riding, for he could read "John Hartley's Sketches" better than the renowned author.

Another of John o'Dick's sons, James Wilkinson, won for himself an honoured name in the Rossendale Valley. He left Earby in 1859, and after a few years residence at Rawtenstall he removed to Waterfoot. From 1863 he occupied a very responsible position with the Newchurch Spinning Co., and he was prominently connected with the Baptist Church at Waterfoot, being the teacher of the Young Men's Class for over twenty years. His wife, Isabella Wilkinson, who was an Earby woman, lived to be over eighty years of age, and it is recorded of her "that those who knew her best loved her most." She had a personality constantly serene and cheerful, and full of ready gracious hospitality."

Their son, Charles, became a first secretary and cashier of Trickett's, Limited, the world famous slipper manufacturers, and was held in very high esteem. Another son, Arthur, had an adventurous career in Australia. Before he migrated he had worked himself up from a messenger boy at Waterfoot Railway Station to become the foreman at the Britannia Quarries, having 500 men under his charge. When he arrived in Sydney, Australia, in 1884, he worked first at stone heaving and later at the Harbour Docks, the finest in the Dominion.

After a visit to the "old country," he introduced Trickett's slippers into Australia, and kept a stall in the market place at Sydney. Then he started "land jobbing" and building, and when he retired from business, having secured a comfortable competence, he and his wife paid another visit to England. He was taken suddenly ill while on a visit to Blackpool, and his remains were interred at the Earby Cemetery, June 1923.

Hartley Wilkinson, the village blacksmith in the old part of Earby, who was referred to in the previous article, was one of the younger sons of John o'Dick's-----

was the wife of the late Robert Greenwood, and the mother of the redoubtable Parker Greenwood, who was for so long Earby's custodian on the Rural District Council and the Board of Guardians (But that is another story, which will follow in due course.)

J.H.

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