

READERS LETTERS

MEMORIES OF OLD EARBY

When my husband's grandfather, John Bailey, was in his 90th year, he paid us a visit at our home in Barnwood, also to greet his great grand-daughter Alice, a few weeks old. He was so glad her name was to be Alice, it was her great grand-mother's name. We talked about one thing and another, then he began to talk about trees. He didn't agree with cutting down trees unless they were dead or in the way of progress. He then began to talk of when he was a young man. He remembered the field from Rake Bank to Standridge being a wood and how grand it was.

He began his married life at Burk Hall, at the bottom of Dark Lane, in the corner of Marfield's first meadow. What an ideal spot for a house, sheltered from the North-east winds and facing South-west. The foundations can still be seen but the stones have been used for walling long since.

They set up house with two chairs, a kist, a bed, pots and pans, a hand loom and a few more necessities. No water laid on, but as he said, "The best water around here, and icy cold on the hottest day from a spring." His son Harrison Bailey was born there 120 years ago. A few years later he came to a cottage at the bottom of Stoney Bank Lane, where he opened a grocer's shop. This was so successful, he built a house and shop on the opposite side also three more houses.

The shop was always known as Bailey's where you could buy almost anything.

Then he built Spring Mill and Spring Terrace for big families to live. Before that there wasn't a house on the right until you got to Banks farm, and no houses on the left from Stoops Hill until one reached Stoney Bank Cottages, High Bake or Bank Farm and cottage. Earby began to develop and John Bailey had a lot to do with it as he was very far seeing.

I'm not sure but I think he was surveyor at one time. He believed it was best to use the very best material even though it was out of sight. Some of his work is good to this day.

Talking about trees reminds me of Windlefield plantation. During the first World War we heard they were cutting it down. A few of us went up to see if we could do anything to stop them, but we were told there was a war on and the mines needed pit props.

I thank all those who have told me how they have enjoyed these talks of old Earby. I'm glad to have given them pleasure. I wish I had listened to more tales but we don't think in our youth.

EMMA BAILEY

Craven Herald - Date unknown.