

THE MULLIONS – UNCOVERING ITS STORY



The Mullions, Newby Road, Farnhill – photographed from the tow-path of the Leeds-Liverpool canal

INTRODUCTION

At the end of this paper is a summary of the findings with supporting documents offering a quick reference to the history of The Mullions as revealed by our research. For those interested in our journey over a period of about 12 months, we present our trials, tribulations and successes leading to our conclusions.

On moving into one of the 4 apartments in The Mullions, we were curious about the history of a building said to have been built circa 1730 (pre-existing the canal.) We were surprised to learn that nothing was known about this building. Anecdotally we were told a number of things: it was once known as “the vicarage”; there had been an internal fire prompting its development into 4 apartments; it had been a manor house. We thought it would be interesting to unravel the story of The Mullions and to see how much of this was true.

For clarification we will refer to the building as “The Mullions” throughout, although, as we will reveal, this is a relatively new designation.

Our first point of reference was to try and trace the deeds, and through the previous owners we identified the Skipton solicitor who was thought to have the documents. Unfortunately, on contacting the solicitor we learnt that everything had been destroyed as there is no longer a legal requirement to hold them. We also enquired of the Land Registry, but their records only go back as far as 2000.

SKIPTON LIBRARY

A very helpful librarian identified 2 books of possible interest which we borrowed:

“Buildings of England, Yorkshire and West Riding” (Published 1994). Under Farnhill only 2 buildings were mentioned:

- Farnhill Hall.
- The Mullions: “English early 18th century. Five bay front with cross- windows, doorway with lugged surround. String course between the storeys ramped at the ends.”

“The Courts and People of South Craven Manors” (2015) by David Gulliver a resident of Cononley. This book gives a comprehensive history of the evolution of local manors and their administration through the Manor Courts. It makes no identifiable reference to The Mullions. It does show that in the 19th century the Manor was owned by James Fox and then his son George Lane- Fox.

In the centre-fold of the book are 2 interesting maps showing plans of the townships of Cononley and Farnhill following a survey by Samuel Swire of Skipton in 1813. It clearly shows The Mullions and Newby Cottage. At this time there are surprisingly few buildings in the village with no Mary Street and just the beginnings of what became Starkey Lane.

We thought that through his research, David Gulliver might have further facts of interest. We wrote to him but he had nothing further to contribute.

The librarian subsequently sent us an extract from another document: **“Department of the Environment List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest in the District of Craven”**. It listed 3 items for Low Farnhill:

- “Aqueduct, circa 1774 by John Longbotham.”
- “Numbers 15, 17, 19 Newby Road: two cottages and a shop late C17 or early C18.” These are situated on the corner of Mary St/Newby Rd facing the Canal. On the front is a well-weathered wooden sign saying “Newby Cottage”. It was inherited by the present occupants who took up residence in 1980s. Henceforth we will refer to them by that name.
- “Numbers 1-4 The Mullions formerly listed as 21-23 Newby Road: house, early C18. Rendered with stone slate roof. Two storeys and 5 bays. Chamfered quoins to which a moulded string course ramps up. Cornice. Central doorway with eared architrave. Windows with unmoulded surround and one unmoulded mullion and transom, 4 to ground floor and 5 to first floor. Three chimneys.”

Note: this description is repeated in the Historic England reference to the property and is grade II listed.

We therefore have confirmation from several authoritative sources that the architecture of The Mullions dates it as early 18th century.

LANE-FOX (referred to earlier as the Lord of the Manor)

A letter was sent to Nicholas Lane-Fox at Bramham Park, descendant of earlier Lords of the Manor, to request access to the estate archives. He kindly replied by email explaining that all records were now held with the Leeds Archive Service and he included a 121 page index of their contents. We went through the index and identified about a dozen documents relating to Farnhill which we thought might be of interest. We contacted Leeds Archives and made arrangements to visit. Unfortunately, this did not reveal additional information about the building. We did, however, find evidence of payments made by a Mrs Newby to the Lord of the Manor.

THE NEWBY FAMILY

During our research we made 2 visits to the County Records Office in Northallerton. During the first one we found the **1845 Farnhill Tithe Map** with accompanying listings. Apparently, this was part of a survey undertaken by the Church Authorities to determine cash contributions in lieu of gifts in kind. We copied the relevant sections of Low Farnhill both overview and close up: at this period there are no named streets and numbered houses. For identification and reference the map gives every building and plot of land a number. Listings then identify the owners of each property and plot of land and it was evident that Mrs Newby held considerable assets in Low Farnhill. Of particular interest were listings 6 & 7 - house, barn, yard and orchard – presently The Mullions and then owned by Mrs Newby with tenant Mr Sugden (who is listed in the 1841 census as occupation “clogger”).

This find was critical for the research. We now had a datum point; a proven point from which we could move forwards and backwards.

It was now apparent that the Newby family were central to the story. At this point we are grateful to Graham (Coordinator of Kildwick & Farnhill History Society) who investigated the Kildwick Parish Records and other documents and enabled us to compile a Newby family tree from the death of Henry Newby 1769 to the death of Maria Newby 1871. Points of interest and relevance:

- Henry Newby was a person of significance in the community: school teacher, parish clerk, church warden, a gentleman and a yeoman – the last attribute suggesting a man with property and modest land holdings. He lies buried beneath an alter tomb under the east window in the churchyard of St Andrew’s Church Kildwick. Unusually the tomb gives no date of birth, but we have his death in 1769. What was the character of the man? It is written in stone and reads: *“Underneath lie interred the remains of Mr Henry Newby, late of Farnhill, a person in judgement, clear and distinguished. In conversation, easy and agreeable. In the despatch of business, faithful and indefatigable. In opinion, orthodox and peaceable. In life, pious and exemplary. This short but just testimony to his real character is piously inscribed as a lasting tribute of respect to his memory by his afflicted widow and descendants.”*
- When Henry dies his estate passes to his son, Joshua (Snr). The latter attends Brasenose College Oxford and ultimately becomes the Clerk in Holy Orders at Great Rollright, Oxfordshire. He marries, has 2 children and dies there in 1811.

- Joshua Newby (Jnr) is born in great Rollright and inherits. He follows his father to Oxford University and marries Maria nee Hardy in 1817; they have 4 children. He becomes a rector in Hasely, Warwickshire where he dies in 1827. His widow, Maria, dies in 1871 whilst living with her children in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

Observations:

From the Newby family tree and timelines, we can identify Maria Newby as the Mrs Newby (widow) in the Tithe Map and Listings of 1845.

We noted the exit of the Newby family from Farnhill following Henry's death and the relocation of his descendants firstly to Oxfordshire and then to Warwickshire. However, they have left behind evidence of their once considerable influence in this area: Newby Road and Newby Cottage in Farnhill; Newby Street, Newby Terrace and Newby House in Crosshills.

At Wakefield Register of Deeds, we found documents showing the Newbys actively disposing of their local assets:

- 1843 Maria sold Lowercroft (land behind Newby Cottage) to John Wilson of Kildwick Grange.
- 1847 Henry (Maria's son) sold land to the Leeds & Bradford Railway Co.

EASTER BOOKS

In 1909 the Rev Brereton wrote a history of the Kildwick Parish Church. In it he mentions the **Easter Books** which recorded tithes. We again visited Northallerton County Archives where the books are held. They date back to 1722, but there are significant gaps and some pages are damaged. We did, however, find that in 1737/38 Mr (Henry) Newby had 2 properties in Farnhill:

- A cottage with William Dean as tenant; is this Newby Cottage?
- A Mr Thomas Holmes living "in Mr Newby's". This building is clearly not described as a cottage and so we have made the assumption that the second reference is to "The Mullions" :consider just how few houses and possible alternatives are shown in the later 1813 map referred to earlier, and that the property subsequently passed to Maria Newby..

Interestingly, the Easter Book of 1749/50 shows that Henry Newby had 10 tenants in Kildwick village in contrast to the 2 in Farnhill.

We feel that we have got as far back as records will allow, and believe that Henry Newby was the first owner of The Mullions and that his first tenant was Thomas Holmes.

EVOLUTION

Fortunately our neighbour (25 Newby Road) still has many of his house deeds. He has a plan dated 24 Feb 1883 from which we find:

- Property is now owned by Messrs John and William Heaton – only 12 years after the death of Maria Newby. Did she or her son and heir, Henry Jnr, sell to them?
- We see that it is now 2 separate dwellings.
- The barn is shown with its frontage level with the main building (The neighbouring Flat number 4 has a bricked-up doorway in the adjoining wall in the sitting room which presumably once gave access between house and barn).

There is a further document and plan/sketch dated 27 September 1899 showing:

- It is still the property of John Heaton. (Same document shows him living in the school house Cowling)
- Conversion of the barn into a house and shop with footprint extending forward – no longer aligned with the principal building.

Note: Cottages at the bottom of Starkey Lane are referred to in the document as “Wilson Terrace”

THE MULLIONS

The current lease for The Mullions was drawn up in 1975 and remains a base document for the tenants of the 4 apartments into which the building is now divided.

The lease was drawn up by William and Margaret Horsley and Geoffrey Alan of Ilkley, the then landlords. This is the first time that the building is referred to as “The Mullions” with the obvious intention of differentiating between the 4 dwellings contained within 21/23 Newby Road.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The building’s architectural style identifies it as early 18th century.

1737/38 the house is owned by Henry Newby with his tenant Thomas Holmes. (St Andrew’s Easter Book.)

1845 the house is owned by Maria Newby (widow) with tenant Mr Sugden a Clogger. (Tithe Map and Listings).

By **1883** the building is owned by Messrs William and John Heaton and has been altered to provide two dwellings. (Deeds and documents held by the tenant at 25 Newby Road)

1899 the property is still owned by John Heaton. It is proposed to develop the barn into a combined dwelling and shop. (Verification as above)

1975 the building is converted into four apartments by William and Margaret Horsley and Geoffrey Alan of Ilkley: for the first time it is designated “The Mullions”.