

Three musical events

Music seems to have been major feature of Farnhill and Kildwick in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There's barely a topic that we research that doesn't have some musical references. So, for example, even the story of the Typhoid epidemic includes a bit-part for Miriam Green, the Farnhill opera singer; then we have the Brass Band story, the Farnhill hymn tune, the Organ grave, etc. etc.

A lot of the musical events seem to have been community affairs; featuring people who knew each other well, and who were quite prepared to do their "turns" for the entertainment of their friends and neighbours. Those of you too young to remember this sort of thing may be surprised to hear that it didn't involve people being "voted off", or people dedicating their performance to recently deceased relatives who had somehow help them on "their journey". All that was required was something called "community spirit" – now, sadly, all but lost.

This short piece brings back memories of three such events: spanning forty years but united by a common desire within the community to have a good time, and by an unsung musical heroine.

"King of Sherwood" – a 1921 Operetta

Recently we were contacted by Mr. Charles Wilcock, who currently lives in Cumbria but who has a family connection with the area. He sent us a copy of the photograph below.



He was able to put names to a few of the characters:

... taken at Kildwick Hall, second from left standing is Arthur Wilcock, then right of him is Harry Roe and first lady kneeling on left is Florence Wilcock.

We can say that Kildwick Hall is almost certainly the location, and the letters K & F. I. at the bottom left most likely stand for "Kildwick and Farnhill Institute". The Institute was, and still is, the centre of most social activities in the two villages, and is known to have been the location for a number of village pageants.

"King of Sherwood" was a popular 2-act comic operetta written in 1906. For further details, including full character list, see

http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/shows_k/kingofsherwood.htm

The 2nd of July 1921 (bottom right) was a Saturday, and the Craven Herald for the following Friday provides the full story:

The annual garden party organised by the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute, which took place on Saturday in the grounds of Kildwick Hall (kindly lent by Messrs. Brigg), took the form of an "Olde Time Fayre." The various stalls were in charge of ladies wearing quaint and ancient costumes, and there were afternoon and evening performances on the lawn of the operetta "The King of Sherwood". The principal characters were:-

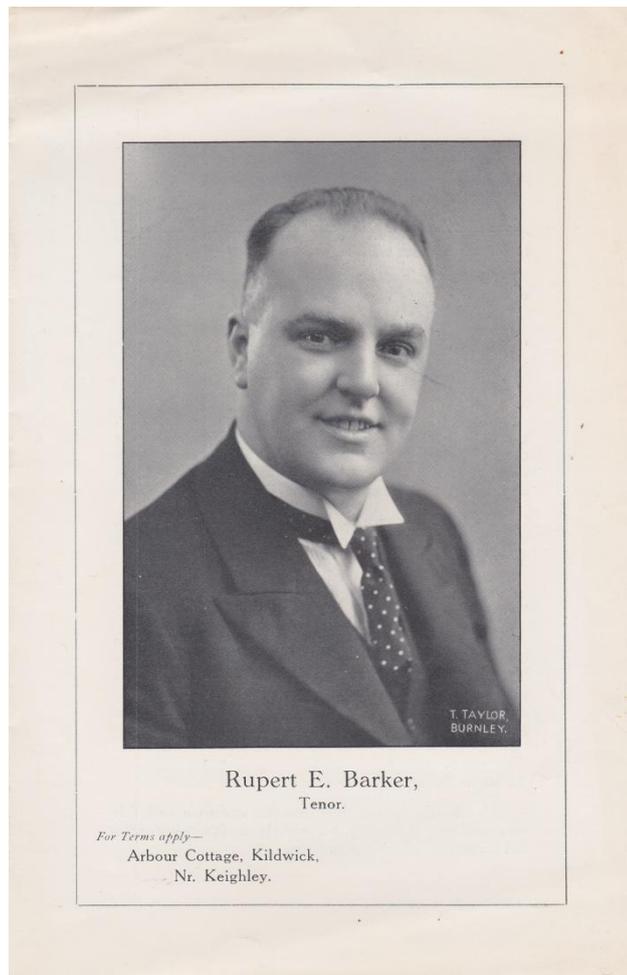
*Robin Hood, Mr. R. E. Barker;
Maid Marian, Mrs. F. Sugden;
King Richard, Mr. Sam Tillotson;
Abbot, Mr. T. Clough;
Sheriff, Mr. G. Holliday;
Little John, Mr. T. Addy;
Much, Mr. A. Wilcock;
Friar Tuck, Mr. A. Darby;
Will Scarlett, Mr. E. Green;
Dame Scarlett, Miss D. Hill;
Sir Richard Lea, Mr. F. Sugden;
Edith, Mrs. T. Addy;
Dorothy, Miss L. Bell; and
Ella, Miss I. Peel.*

Although each member of the company acquitted themselves well, Mr. A. Darby's clever impersonation of Friar Tuck is worthy of mention. Much credit was due to Mr. T. Appleby, the coach, and Mr. E. Spencer, who was responsible for the musical part of the programme. Mr. Julius Spencer's orchestra accompanied. During the interval, tea was served in the courtyard. At the close, a vote of thanks was accorded Messrs. Brigg and also all those who had assisted to make the effort a success. The proceeds, amounting to over £65, were for the Institute funds.

£65 in 1921 equates to over £2200 in today's prices.

We know a little about quite a few of the cast. So:

- *Sheriff, Mr. G. Holliday* – lived in Church Terrace Kildwick (opposite the White Lion).
- *Maid Marian, Mrs. F. Sugden; Sir Richard Lea, Mr. F. Sugden* – a married couple. At this time, Mr Sugden was conductor of the Kildwick and District Brass Band.
- *Friar Tuck, Mr. A. Darby* – this is Albert Darby, for 50 years a member of the Methodist Chapel choir and sometime secretary of the Institute.
- *Will Scarlett, Mr. E. Green* – ran the butcher's shop opposite the Institute building in Farnhill Main Street.
- *Dame Scarlett, Miss D. Hill* – as we shall see later in this piece, Dorothy Hill was to play a major part in village musical events for a number of years.
- *Robin Hood, Mr. R. E. Barker* – this is almost certainly Rupert Barker, of Farnhill, who was a professional or semi-professional singer.



“Daily Express.”

By R. Stephen Williams.

WONDER VOICE OF THE FESTIVAL.

.....the miracle worker was Mr. R. E. Barker, of Kildwick; he has a voice of true tenor quality robust and resonant. He has what I believe is called “fire.”

He sang this afternoon with magnificent spirit. In colloquial language, he “let us have it.”

“A Royal Romance” – 1950s (?)

Although we haven’t been able to find out much about this event we know that it was an operetta written and produced by Dorothy Hill and Mary Ward, and featuring the children of Farnhill and Kildwick.



The Dorothy Hill mentioned above is almost certainly the same Miss D. Hill who appeared in “King of Sherwood”.

A Victorian Music Hall evening – 1961 “It’s better than telly ...”



The photograph above was published by the Craven Herald on May 5th 1961, at the head of an article about a Victorian music hall evening, put on by the committee of Kildwick and Farnhill Institute, as part of the annual tea and concert for pensioners of the two villages. It shows:

Back Row (L to R): Evelyn Brown, Norris Webb, Eva Hargreaves, William Dawson, Laura Holden

Front row: Blanche Kitson, Dora Webb, Dorothy Hill (guest soloist), Florence Whitaker, and Cissie Lofthouse

Once again, 40 years after her appearance in “King of Sherwood”, it appears that Dorothy Hill took centre stage as the “guest soloist”.

The newspaper article goes on to describe how:

... the committee not only prepared the food and served it but later got themselves rigged up ... and presented a rousing music hall programme.

The programme was quite adventurous:

Mr. and Mrs. L. Balderson were host and hostess, and Mr. William Dawson was chairman. Dorothy Hill (Farnhill) was guest artiste, and others contributing solos or duets were Hilda Sugden, Florence Whitaker, Laura Holden, Cissie Lofthouse, Marjorie Hill and Grace Marklew. Monologues were spoken by Laura Holden and Dorothy Simpson, and the can-can was danced by Marjorie Hill, Grace Marklew, and Winifred Barrett.

Norrie Webb mystified with magic and also played the mouth organ with an irresistible rhythm, so that everyone just had to join in, and a hearty chorus was made up of Kathleen Butterfield, Dora Webb, Blanche Kitson, Marian Wilson, Eva Hargreaves, and Evelyn Brown.

Mrs. Balderson was the pianist who accompanied everything and who never had time to draw breath all night.

Apparently, the Institute had recently been renovated:

The tea was served in the lovely upstairs room where, with the removal of the billiards table, the committee have been able to redecorate and to lay a tiled floor. The old fireplace has been retained and, together with the dark oak panelling, this gives the room a character of its own.

Downstairs, the dance and concert room is equally attractive and it provided a bright and attractive setting for the evening's concert.

Note: The slate base of the billiard table was subsequently used to provide support for the wooden seat situated adjacent to Spout House in High Farnhill.

The article concludes:

"It's better than the telly" was the verdict of the audience, and despite (or was it because of ?) all the hard work, those taking part thought so too.

What next – can you help ?

Do you have any photographs or stories about Kildwick and Farnhill that you would be willing to share with us ? Can you provide any further information about the "Royal Romance" operetta mentioned in this piece ?

If so, please contact us by email at history@farnhill.co.uk. Alternatively, why not come along to one of our monthly meetings – details on the website.