

George Holliday the Farnhill milkman – and his assistant

Before milk came in plastic containers from supermarkets, even before it came in glass bottles, the milkman would deliver it to your door by horse-and-cart and dispense it, directly from a churn, using a milk ladle.

But what if you were a milkman in a small village, with steep, narrow streets, where a slow-moving horse and cart might run into problems ? How did you get the milk to your customers ?

Either side of WW1, George Holliday – one of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers – was a milkman in Farnhill and regularly had to get milk up Starkey Lane, Mary Street, and the other streets that led up from Main Street. He came up with an elegant solution to the problem – he employed an assistant to do the heavy hauling for him. She was called Jenny ...



Jenny was a clever donkey, who knew the milk-round as well as George did. If they came to a door which was closed, she would try to lift the latch with her nose. Failing that, she would knock on the door with her hoof until it was opened. For which trouble she expected a bun as reward. She was only prevented from walking straight into the house by the width of the churns she carried.

George Holliday obtained his milk from a Mr. Jonas Laycock of Prospect Farm, Kildwick, and sold it at 2½d a pint in summer and 3d a pint in winter (12d = 5p). On Wednesdays and Thursdays, which were regular baking days, Jenny would always have to carry an extra gallon or two.

The photograph shown above was taken near the top of the Arbour and was frequently included in the magic lantern shows put on by the Methodist Church. If Mr. Holliday was present, he would always explain to the audience that he was “the one with the leggings on”.

Below, a picture of another “milk donkey”.



This donkey is from an earlier generation to Jenny. In their one of their books of local photographs and postcards, Whitaker and Wood record that this donkey belonged to Ben Smith, who farmed at Kildwick Grange at the end of the nineteenth century. He was almost certainly a relative of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteer, Ben Thornton Smith.

Here's another picture (of the same donkey ?)



This was taken outside Priest Bank Cottage, at the top of Priest Bank Road.

Acknowledgements

This piece was derived from a piece originally published on the [Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group](#) website.

The information was sourced from an undated newspaper cutting in the History Group archive. This notes that George Holliday was, at that time, living in Crosshills and was aged 90 – which would date it to 1975. Also, that the photograph (shown on page 1) had been loaned by a Miss M. Moore of Mary Street.

