

# William Feather (1878 – 1957)

William Feather was born in Farnhill and by the age of 12 was working in a cotton mill. A gifted musician, who was active in many village organisations, he married a girl who was in service at Kildwick Hall.

Because William Feather's name is on the Farnhill Parish Council list of volunteers it can be assumed that he volunteered to serve in World War 1 – although local newspaper reports from 1915 to 1918, show that he was taking part in village activities throughout that period.

William and his wife, Minnie, had three children, but one daughter died in a whooping cough epidemic in 1916.

After the war William continued his musical activities as a violinist with the Institute Orchestra. Later he was one of the organisers for local celebrations of the coronation of George VI, in 1937.

He died in 1957 and is buried, with his young daughter, in a grave in Kildwick churchyard.



Photograph by kind permission of Elaine Clewer

## Pre-war life

William Feather was born in on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1878, in Farnhill, and was baptised in October of that year, at St. Andrew's, Kildwick. He was the youngest of three children born to Overton Feather, originally from Sutton in Craven, and Elizabeth (nee Overend), who was born in Farnhill.

William's sister, Emma, and his brother, James, were both born in Farnhill, in 1874 and 1877 respectively. James died in December 1878 – just before his second birthday and six months after William was born.

It is likely that William attended Kildwick school but by the time of the 1891 census, taken when he was 12, he had already left school and was working – as were the other members of the family – in a cotton mill.

Administrative County of <u>York</u>			The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the										Page 15	
Civil Parish of <u>Farnhill</u>			Urban Sanitary District of <u>Farnhill</u>		Rural Sanitary District of <u>Kipton</u>		Parliamentary Borough of <u>Kipton</u>		Ecclesiastical Parish of <u>Kildwick</u>					
No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN						
82	Canal Terrace	1	Samuel P. Bawn	Head	M	34	stone mason	Do Shipley						
			James	Do Wife	M	32		Do Shipley						
			Child	Do Son		8m		Do Farnhill						
82	Do	1	Overton Feather	Head	M	51	Cotton Trap Driver	Do Sutton						
			Elizabeth	Do Wife	M	49	Cotton Weaver	Do Farnhill						
			Emma	Do Son		10	Do	Do Do						
			William	Do Son		12	Cotton Spinner	Do Do						

Extract from 1891 census return for Farnhill – Feather family living at Canal Terrace  
Used under licence from the National Archive

William's mother died on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1901, aged 56, and this is reflected on the census taken later that year, which shows Overton and his two children living at 87 Main Street, Farnhill. Overton himself died later that year, aged 61. Both of William's parents were buried in Kildwick.

William seems to have been a quite gifted violinist, and his name appears in connection with a number of musical events in the village; the earliest of these being a concert held in Kildwick school on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1900.

**KILDWICK NATIONAL SCHOOL.**  
THE ANNUAL  
**CONCERT**  
In connection with the Day School, will be held  
**ON SATURDAY, DEC. 15TH, 1900.**  
The Proceeds to be devoted to the purchase of Pictures & Apparatus.

The INFANTS and JUNIOR SCHOLARS will give  
**A Miscellaneous Entertainment**  
Consisting of Action Songs, Recitations, Drill, etc.;  
After which, the Senior Scholars will Perform in Costume  
an original fanciful  
**OPERETTA ENTITLED :**  
**'THE SILVER PENNY,'**  
*The Words by Louis B. Tisdale, the Music composed by J. L. Raekel*  
A life-like Collection of Waxwork Figures will be Exhibited.

Conductors—Mr. T. APPLEBY and Mrs. AIREY.  
Accompanists—Miss SPENCER and Mr. F. TILLOTSON.  
Violins—Mr. W. FEATHER and Miss A. WHITAKER.  
Flute—Mr. NORMAN SPENCER.

Doors open at 6.30 p.m. To commence at 7 p.m.  
Admission: Reserved Seats 1/6; Front Seats 1/-; Back do. 6d.  
Tickets may be had from Teachers and Scholars.  
N.B. Children will be admitted at Half-price to the Dress Rehearsal  
at 2 p.m. the same Afternoon.

GEORGE U. METCALFE, PRINTER, CROSSHILLS

Concert programme – included in Kildwick School log book  
Reproduced by kind permission of Kildwick School

He also performed in a similar show a year later.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 1904, William married Minnie Watson at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick.

Minnie had been born in Halifax but had come to the area, at the age of 14, to be a domestic servant for the Brigg family at Kildwick Hall. They gave her a set of silver spoons as a wedding present.

The 1911 census records the couple living, with two children – John Overton (known as Jack) and Barbara Watson – and William's sister Emma, at 17 Mary Street, Farnhill. Subsequently, sometime between 1915 and 1918, the family moved to number 5.



John Overton (Jack) and Barbara Watson Feather  
 Photograph courtesy of Elaine Clewer

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.									
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.									
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions than the preparation of Statistical Tables.									
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.		BIRTHPLACE of every person.
1 William Feather	Head	32	Married	5	2	0	Cotton Weaver 833	Worke/4	York Farnhill
2 Annie Feather	Wife	29	Married	5	2	0			York Halifax 03
3 John Burton Feather	Son	5					School		York Farnhill
4 Barbara Watson Feather	Daughter	4							York Farnhill
5 Emma Feather	Sister	36	Single				Cotton Weaver 250	Worke/4	York Farnhill

Extract from the 1911 census return for 17 Mary Street, Farnhill  
 Used under licence from the National Archive

**Note:** The "Particulars of Marriage" section records that the couple had been married for five years, and had had two children, both living; no children born to the marriage had died.

In addition to his interest in musical events, William also appears to have played a role in a large number of village organisations, as reported in the local press:

- Kildwick Parish Institute committee member, 1909 (Craven Herald, 3/2/1909)
- Kildwick Old Boys' Football Club secretary, 1909 (Craven Herald, 23/4/1909)
- Farnhill Water Company director, 1910 (Craven Herald, 21/1/1910)
- Farnhill Institute committee, 1912 (Craven Herald, 18/10/1912)
- Kildwick Albion Cricket Club secretary, 1914/15 (Keighley News 23/1/1915)

## William Feather during WW1

There is no doubt that William Feather volunteered to serve in WW1 – otherwise his name would not have been included in the Farnhill Parish Council Roll of Honour. However, it has not been possible to say when, where, or how he served. Given his age when war broke out and the fact that he was married with children, and a diabetic, it may have been that his application to join the forces was rejected.

No newspaper reports of the period mentioned him as a member of the armed forces, or included his name in any list of the men who were serving, and he left no known recollections of service life during WW1 with his family.

On the other hand there a number of pieces of evidence that suggest William was in the village for large parts of the war period:

- 23/1/1915 (Keighley News) – William delivered the secretary's report to Kildwick Albion Cricket Club, and was re-elected as secretary for the coming year.
- William was recorded on the 1915 electoral roll for Farnhill, living at 17 Mary Street.
- 4/8/1917 (Keighley News) – William won a number of prizes at Farnhill Flower Show.
- William appeared on the 1918 electoral roll, living at 5 Mary Street. A number of other servicemen appear on this roll as "Absent Voters", but William was clearly present in the village at the time the roll was compiled.
- 13/7/1918 (Keighley News) – William formed part of a string trio which performed at an "Olde Time Fayre" held at Kildwick Hall to raise funds for Kildwick and Farnhill Institute.

In February 1916, at a time when an epidemic of whooping cough was running through Kildwick School, William and Minnie's daughter Barbara died. Her death was recorded in the Kildwick School log by the headmaster, Thomas Appleby.

" 15. Miss Spencer (V.A) was out of school this afternoon from 2.15pm to 3. in order to attend the funeral of one of her scholars Barbara Feather. who has died after a brief illness. The teachers & scholars sent a wreath to the funeral.

Kildwick School log entry – 15<sup>th</sup> February 1916  
Reproduced by kind permission of Kildwick School

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 1917, William and Minnie's third child, the exotically named Venice Mary, was born. (Venice was named after a lady who had visited Kildwick Hall when Minnie was a servant there. Her godmother was Lily Green, the sister of Farnhill WW1 Volunteers Joseph and Harry Green.)



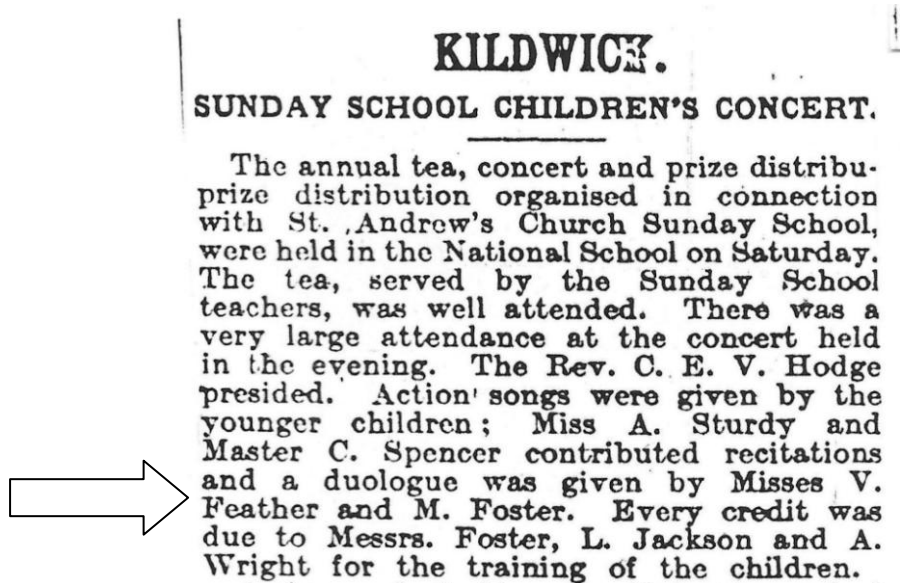
Venice Mary Feather  
Photograph courtesy of Elaine Clewer

## Post-war life

After the war William, Minnie and their children continued to live at 5 Mary Street. The 1921 census records the family living there, along with William's sister Emma. Both William and Emma are recorded as working for the Bingley Weaving Company at the mill in Farnhill Main Street (the old Farnhill Mill building). William as a warp-dresser and Emma as a weaver.

The Kildwick School pupil admissions records for 1918 to 1931 (the only years for which records have been found) record the attendance of Venice Mary from 27/9/1921 (aged 4 years, 8 months) to 17/9/1928 – when she left to go to secondary school.

Throughout the 1920s the Feather children, Jack and Venice, followed their father in taking part in a number of musical events in the village. Jack in particular appears to have had a fine bass voice.



**KILDWICK.**  
**SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S CONCERT.**

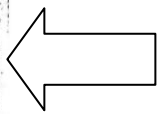
The annual tea, concert and prize distribution organised in connection with St. Andrew's Church Sunday School, were held in the National School on Saturday. The tea, served by the Sunday School teachers, was well attended. There was a very large attendance at the concert held in the evening. The Rev. C. E. V. Hodge presided. Action songs were given by the younger children; Miss A. Sturdy and Master C. Spencer contributed recitations and a duologue was given by Misses V. Feather and M. Foster. Every credit was due to Messrs. Foster, L. Jackson and A. Wright for the training of the children.

From Craven Herald 1925 (exact date unknown)

By kind permission of Craven Herald

**Palm Sunday.**—Special services were held in the Lang Kirk of Craven on Palm Sunday.

Following an address by the Rev. C. E. V. Hodge, an augmented choir gave a really fine and acceptable rendering of Stainer's cantata, "The Crucifixion." The tenor solos were admirably sung by Mr. Frank Smith, Oakworth. His best item was "The Majesty of the Divine Humiliation." The bass solos had a fine exponent in Mr. Sam Tillotson, his rendering of the solos, "Could ye not watch with me" and "Is it nothing to you," being very fine, and he and Mr. Smith combined with most pleasing effect in the duet, "So Thou liftest Thy Divine petition." The minor bass solos were ably sung by Mr. J. O. Feather. The chorus work was especially fine, there being no raggedness in attack and the voices blending harmoniously. The choir was heard at its best in "God so loved the world," and they are to be complimented on the way they attacked the difficult final chorus, "The appeal of the Crucified."

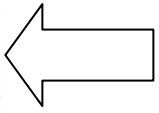


Extract of an article from the Craven Herald 2/4/1926  
By kind permission of Craven Herald

## **KILDWICK.**

### **EASTER AT THE CHURCH.**

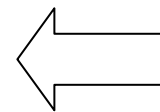
The largest congregation of the day assembled for evensong. The choir gave an acceptable rendering of the anthem, "I am He that liveth," the bass solo being taken by Mr. J. O. Feather. Mr. J. Spencer was choirmaster, and Mr. G. Spencer presided at the organ.



Extract of an article from the Craven Herald 9/4/1926  
By kind permission of Craven Herald

again.

**Harvest Thanksgiving Services** were held at "the Lang Kirk o' Craven" on Sunday. The church had been tastefully decorated. There were nearly 60 communicants at the early morning service, the celebrant being Canon Crosthwaite (Lucknow), assisted by the Vicar of Kildwick (Rev. C. E. V. Hodge). The other services attracted large congregations, the church being almost filled for evensong. Canon Crosthwaite preached both morning and evening, and also addressed special services for children and men in the afternoon. At the latter he gave a spirited address on the good work which was being carried out in the mission fields in India. At evensong the Magnificat was sung to a special setting, and the choir, under the leadership of Mr. E. Spencer, gave a creditable rendering of the anthem, "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem." Mr. J. O. Feather took the bass solo part. Mr. G. Spencer was organist. The offerings throughout the day amounted to £16 1s. 4d., and were for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.



From Craven Herald 8/10/1926  
By kind permission of Craven Herald

In 1930, William and his son combined, with others, to form a scratch-band that played at a garden fete in the grounds of Kildwick Hall to raise funds for Kildwick and Farnhill Institute, styling themselves "The Institute Orchestra".

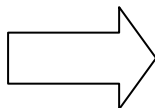
## FARNHILL INSTITUTE.

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### GARDEN FETE SUPERSEDES MUSIC FESTIVAL.

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Following the programme, tea was served by lady members of the Institute in the courtyard and the Institute Orchestra, comprising Mr. J. O. Feather (piano), Mrs. Slater, Mr. W. Feather and Mr. W. J. Whitaker (violins), Mr. Julius Spencer (viola), Mr. A. Clough ('cello), Mr. A. Stephens (double bass) and Mrs. Scargill (flute), rendered selections which were greatly appreciated. Other attractions took the form of side-shows, which did a brisk trade.



Extracts from an in the Craven Herald 29/8/1930  
By kind permission of Craven Herald

Around this time, William also became involved with the local lodge of the Oddfellows and when the senior member of the lodge, Richard Green Kitson (father of the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers Albert and Harry Kitson) died, William was one of the coffin bearers (Craven Herald 25/2/1927).



William Feather in Oddfellows Provincial Grand Master regalia  
Photograph courtesy of Elaine Clewer

In 1933 William and Minnie's son, Jack, married Elsie Campbell and they set up home at 15 Ashleigh Street, in Keighley.

In 1937, William was a member of the committee that organised the Farnhill and Kildwick celebrations for the coronation of King George VI. He, together with his wife Minnie, (who may also have been a committee member), and his sister Emma attended the tea-party for older residents of the village.



Front cover of the programme for the Farnhill and Kildwick 1937 coronation celebrations  
From the Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group archive

It is clear that William was also a member of the Kildwick & Farnhill Institute in the 1930s. The project has seen records of him paying membership fees of 7/6d each year for 1937 to 1939.

By the time of the 1939 Register, created when ration cards were being distributed at the start of WW2, 5 Mary Street was occupied by William and Minnie; Emma, William's older sister; and Venice, their daughter – who was employed as a Building Society Clerk.

1	Feather William	✓	M.	5 June	78	M	Raspberries <del>hatched</del>
2	Feather Muriel	✓	F	26 Aug	81	M	Raspberries <del>from Fabis</del>
3	Feather Emma	✓	F	26 Feb	92	F	Raspberries <del>hatched</del>
4	McARDLE Feather Thomas M	✓	F	17 Jan	19	F	Building <del>Grange</del> <del>Crest</del>

1939 Register entry for 5 Mary Street, Farnhill  
Used under licence from the National Archive

**Note:** The 1939 Register was updated after WW2 to record subsequent changes of surname, hence it also records Venice's married name.

In 1946 Venice married Thomas McArdle in the Paddington area of West London. The couple set up home in Hampton.

William Feather died, of pneumonia, in St. John's Hospital, Keighley, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1957. He was buried in Kildwick churchyard, with his daughter Barbara.



William Feather's grave in St. Andrew's churchyard, Kildwick

## Postscript

After William's death his wife, Minnie, went to live with their daughter, Venice Mary, in Hampton, west of London. She died in 1978, aged 96.

John (Jack) Overton Feather died in the Keighley area, in 1977. Venice Mary McArdle died in Hampton, in 1979.

John and his wife are known to have had a child, and there are descendants living in the local area.

## William Feather – a life in summary

**Born:** 5/6/1878, Farnhill

**Baptised:** 27/10/1878, Kildwick

**Died:** 31/12/1957, St. John's Hospital, Keighley      **Aged:** 79

**Home address:** 5 Mary Street, Farnhill

### Parents

**Father:** Overton; b. 1840, Sutton; d. 1/10/1901, Farnhill

**Mother:** Elizabeth (nee Overend); b. 28/12/1844, Farnhill; d. 15/1/1901, Farnhill;  
buried 18/1/1901, Kildwick

**Married:** 1873, Skipton (Registration district)

### Siblings

Emma; b. 26/10/1874, Farnhill; d. 9/5/1956, Farnhill; buried 12/5/1956, Kildwick St. Andrew's  
James; b. 27/1/1877, Farnhill; d. December 1878, Farnhill

### WW1 service

No service details known.

### Marriage

**Wife:** Minnie Watson; b. 26/8/1882, Skircoat, Halifax; d. 1978, Hampton

**Date:** 26/4/1904, at St. Andrew's, Kildwick

### Children

John Overton; b. 31/10/1905; m. Elsie Campbell, 15/7/1933, St. John's Church, Ingrow;  
d. February 1977

Barbara Watson; b. 28/11/1906; d. 1916, Farnhill; buried 15/2/1916, Kildwick

Venice Mary; b. 27/1/1917; m. Thomas McArdle, 1946, Paddington (Registration district);  
d. 1979, Hampton

