


## John Hill (1875 – 1940)

John Hill, who became a canal warehouseman, was born in Farnhill in 1875. His father was a coal agent and he had two half-sisters and two brothers.

Although a volunteer in WW1 nothing is known about his war service. However he was well known in the district, being a bell ringer at St Andrew's Church and a member of the Parish Institute Committee.

Living with relatives all his life, John Hill never married and died in 1940.



No Photo  
Available

### Pre-war life

John Hill was born in Farnhill on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1875. He was the first child of Anthony Holmes Hill and Elizabeth Davy (nee English). They had married in 1874, and it was a second marriage for both of them.

Anthony Holmes Hill's first marriage had been to Catherine Hardacre on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1870. She died in February 1873, aged 34. They had no children.

Elizabeth English's first marriage had been to Richard Davy, towards the end of 1867. They had two daughters: Mary Isabella and Kate, born in 1868 and 1869 respectively. Richard Davy died in December 1869, aged 27.

By the time of the 1881 census the Hill-Davy family was complete. The household, at 19 Starkey Lane, consisted of: Anthony and Elizabeth, Elizabeth's two daughters from her first marriage, and the children born to Anthony and Elizabeth – John, aged 5, and his two younger brothers – Fred, aged four, and George, aged two. Anthony was a coal agent, as was his younger brother (another John Hill) who was living at 18 Starkey Lane.

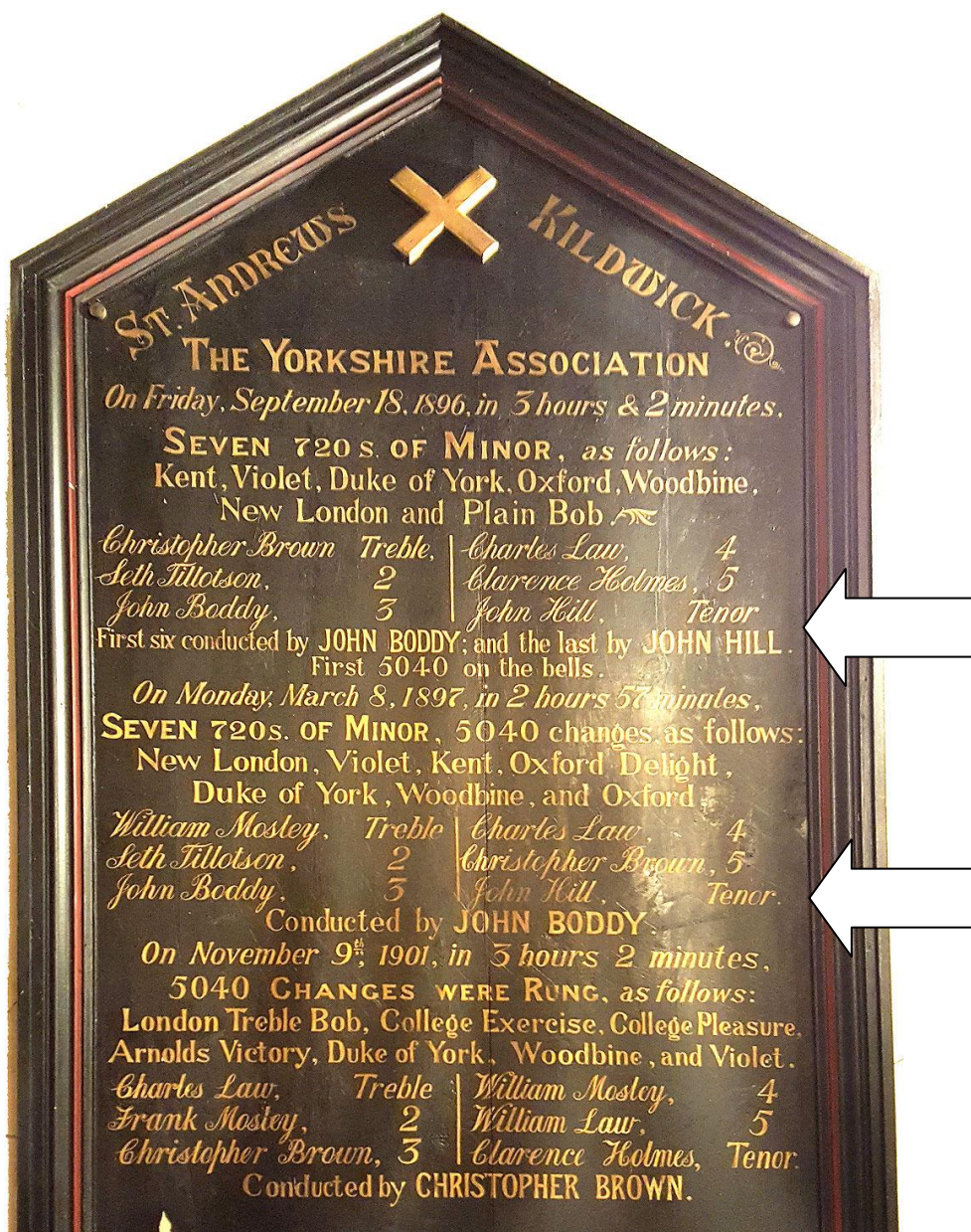
It is likely that John Hill attended Kildwick school, working part-time from around age 12 and leaving school to find full-time work in his early teens. Certainly by the time of the 1891 census, all five of the children, including the 15 year-old John, were working in the local cotton mills.

1891 was the last census on which the whole family appeared together. In 1892 Mary Isabella Davy married Thomas Whiteoak; and in 1894, Kate Davy married Richard Wilcock.

Civil Parish	Municipal Borough	Municipal Ward	Urban Sanitary District	Town or Village or Hamlet	Rural Sanitary District	Parliamentary Borough or Division	Notes						
Farnhill				Farnhill	Skipton	Skipton							
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Inhabited (H) or Vacant (V)	Whether of stone or brick	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN					
Starkey Lane	1	X	Anthony Hill	Head	M	61	Coral Agent	Do					
			Eliasham	Wife	M	56		Cumberland Carlisle					
			Mary J. Lary	Son	S	8	Cotton Weaver	York Farnhill					
			Walter	Son	S	24	Do	Do					
			John Hill	Son		11	Do	Do					
			Edith	Son		11	Do	Do					
			George	Son		12	Spinning Doffer	Do					

Extract from the 1891 census return for Starkey Lane, Farnhill

Around this time, John Hill became one of the bell-ringers at St. Andrew's Kildwick. His name appears on a "peal board", still on display in the bell tower, commemorating the first full peal rung on the bells, in 1896; and another full peal rung in 1897.



Peal board from the bell-tower of St. Andrew's, Kildwick

**Note:** According to the 1891 census, there were four men with the name John Hill living in Farnhill at that time, and two in 1901. Although we cannot be certain that the John Hill named on the board for 1896 and 1897 is the Farnhill WW1 Volunteer, information on a second peal board (see later), provides additional evidence.

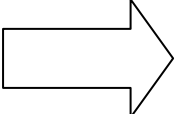
The 1901 census reflected the changes happening in the Hill family as the children grew up. At that time John, aged 25, who was working as a canal warehouseman, was still living with his parents, now at 13 Starkey Lane. Fred, who had married in 1900, was also living there with his wife, Sarah Ann (nee Maskew). Kate Wilcock, John's half sister, lived next door to her family at 15 Starkey Lane, with her husband and their three children. Her sister, Mary Isabella Whiteoak was living at Crag Top with her husband and mother in law. The youngest brother George was living as a boarder with a family in Colne.

John's father, Anthony Holmes Hill, died on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1901 and was buried three days later in Kildwick churchyard. He was aged 72.

Fred and Sarah Ann's first child, a daughter called Lily, was born in January 1902 at 13 Starkey Lane. However by the time their son Rowland was born, in November 1903, they were living at 7 Bucklar Hill. Later they moved to Hardings Houses, by the railway line.

It might have been around this time, and certainly by 1906, that John and his mother moved in with his half-sister Kate and her family at 15 Starkey Lane.

John extended his association with the church by becoming a member of the Parish Institute Committee.



**KILDWICK.**

**PARISH INSTITUTE.**—The annual meeting of the members of this institute was held in the billiard-room on Friday evening, the Rev J W Rhodes (vicar) presiding. The balance-sheet, which was adopted, showed that the year commenced with a balance in hand of £4 12s and ended with an adverse balance of 3s 7d. This was accounted for by the payment of loans amounting to over £15. The billiard receipts were over £15. and the members' subscriptions amounted to £7 5s. The expenditure amounted to over £36. The membership of the club was 33, being about the same as last year. The following officers were elected:—President, Rev J W Rhodes; secretary, Mr George Sunderland; treasurer, Mr H Birtwhistle; auditor, Mr T Sugden; committee—Messrs J Hill, R Hill, J Sutcliffe, W Feather, W Smith and H Foster.

Craven Herald, 3/2/1909 – by kind permission of the Craven Herald

**Note:** The Parish Institute was distinct from the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute, which opened in 1911. The Parish Institute was probably based in the Kildwick Parish Rooms.



By the time of the 1911 census, the new family structure was well established:

- Richard Wilcock, Head, aged 41; Loomer/Twister
- Kate Wilcock, Wife, aged 41
- Florence Wilcock, Daughter, aged 16; Weaver
- Harry Wilcock, Son, aged 14; Loomer's assistant
- Arthur Wilcock, Son, aged 12; School
- Elizabeth Hill, Boarder, aged 66
- John Hill, Boarder, aged 35; Warp dresser in a cotton mill

**Note:** The census return for 1911 records the family living at 21 Newby Road – in four rooms. This is at odds with the electoral roll for the period 1905 to 1915 which has Richard Wilcock living at number 15 throughout.

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, or for other 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 Richard Wilcock	Head	41	Married	17	3 3	Loomer & Twister	in Cotton Mill	Worster	Ashton Lancashire
2 Kate Wilcock	Wife	41	Married	17	3 3				Farnhill Yorkshire
3 Florence Wilcock	Daughter	16	Single			Weaver	in Cotton Mill	Worster	Farnhill Yorkshire
4 Harry Wilcock	Son	14				Loomer Assistant	in Cotton Mill	Worster	Farnhill Yorkshire
5 Arthur Wilcock	Son	12				School			Farnhill Yorkshire
6 Elizabeth Hill	Boarder	66	Widow						Hurstonfield Lincoln
7 John Hill	Boarder	35	Single			Warp Dresser	in Cotton Mill	Worster	Farnhill Yorkshire

Extract from the 1911 census return for 21 Newby Road, Farnhill

**Note:** The "Particulars of Marriage" section records that Richard and Kate had been married for 17 years, and had had three children, all living; no children born to the marriage had died.

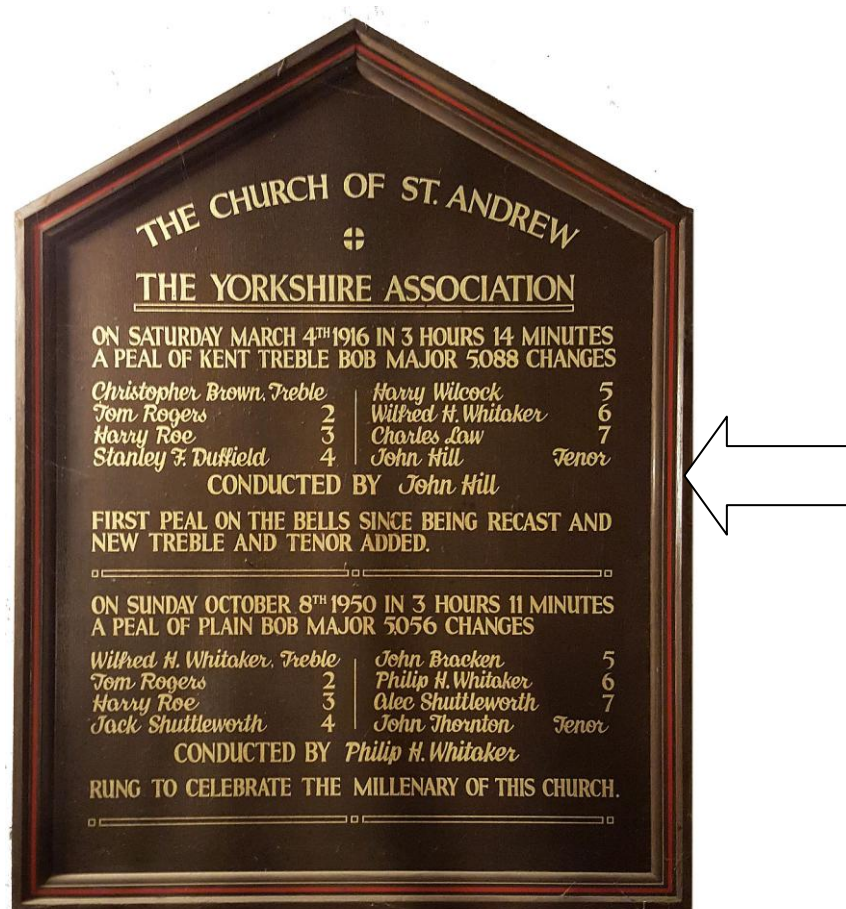
In July 1914, Richard Wilcock purchased 11 Mary Street and the entire family, including John and his mother, moved there with them. The purchase was made from Thomas Whiteoak, the husband of Kate Wilcock's sister, Mary Isabella. It had previously been the home of the Green family – Harry, Joseph and Charles Green would all become Farnhill WW1 Volunteers.

## John Hill during WW1

There is no doubt that John Hill 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.

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.

He must have been in village at the start of March 1916, as on the 4<sup>th</sup> the first full peal was rung on the new Kildwick bells. He was both the conductor and rang the Tenor bell.



Peal board from the bell-tower of St. Andrew's, Kildwick

**Note:** This peal also included Harry Wilcock, Kate and Richard's eldest son, on bell number 5. Harry would subsequently be conscripted.

The solitary piece of evidence that he must have served comes from the 1918 electoral roll for Farnhill, which includes John Hill of 11 Mary Street as a Division II Elector – eligible to vote as a result of his military service.

## Post-war life

After the war John continued to live with the Wilcock family, at 11 Mary Street, and is recorded in the 1921 census as working as a warp dresser for the Bingley Weaving Company at the Industrial Shed on Farnhill Main Street (the remains of the old Farnhill Mill building).

Between 1921 and 1926 (possibly longer) he rented an allotment from Farnhill Parish Council at a cost of 6/3d per year (31p). His final recorded payment was for the year up to the end of March 1926.

It is clear that John 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.

A member of the Wilcock family who remembers John Hill in his later years describes him as “a sad sort of character who never seemed to involve himself with the rest of the family”. He never discussed his experiences during WW1.

The 1939 Register for 11 Mary Street, created at the start of WW2 to enable ration cards to be issued, recorded John living with the Wilcock family. He was listed as being an incapacitated warp dresser.

Wilcock Richard	✓	bn	1 Dec	68	M	Former Master Kildwick	Employed
Wilcock Kate	✓	f	24 Aug	69	M	Wife of Richard	
Wilcock Florence	✓	f	11 Sept	94	S	Sister of Richard	
Hill John	✓	bn	11 Feb	18	S	Warp dresser	Incapacitated

Extract from the 1939 Register for 11 Mary Street, Farnhill  
Used under licence from the National Archive

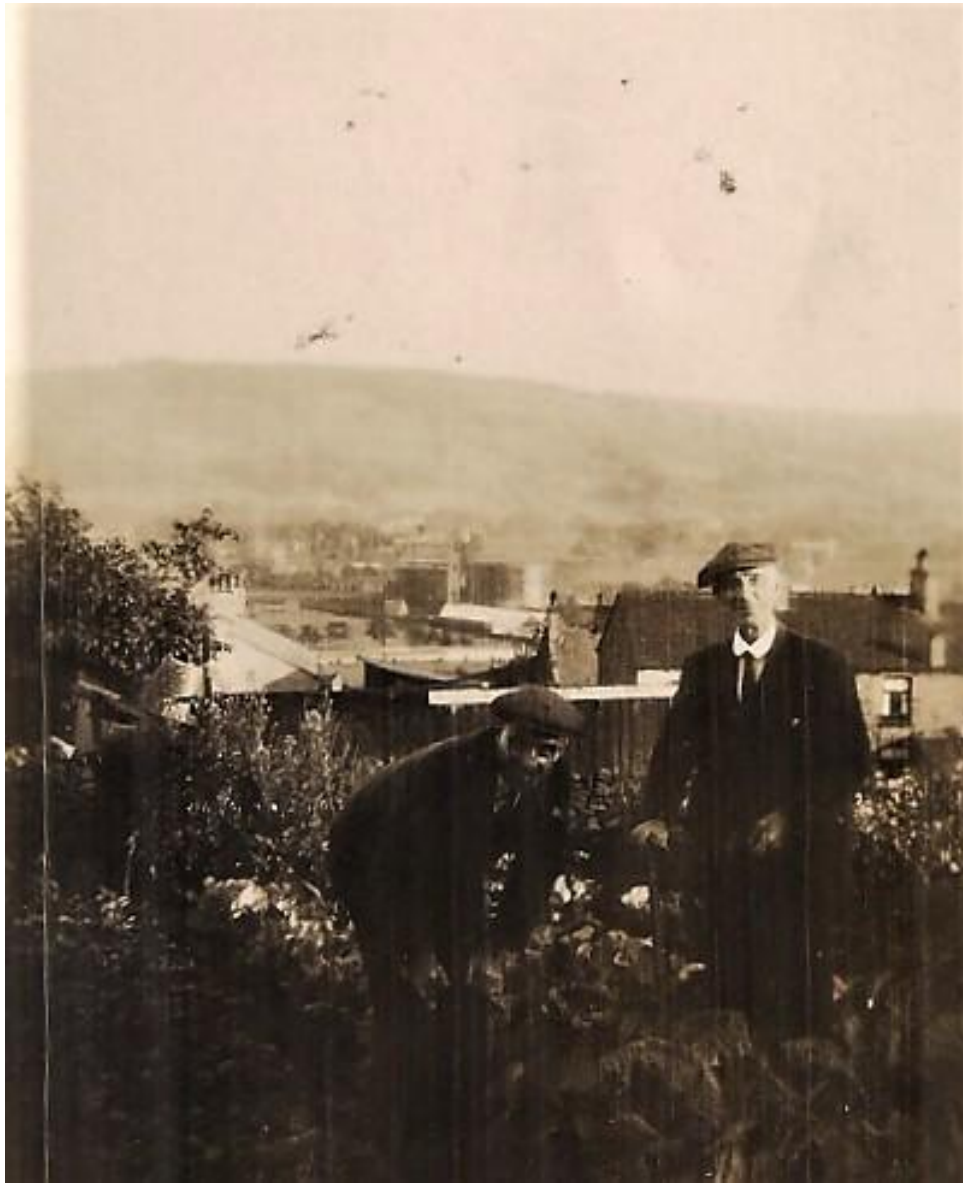
John Hill died on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1940, aged 64. He was buried in Kildwick graveyard, in a large family plot.



Part of the gravestone of the Hill family, in Kildwick graveyard – laid flat and partially overgrown  
Anthony Holmes Hill, Elizabeth his wife, John Hill their son, and Florence (Wilcock) their grand-daughter



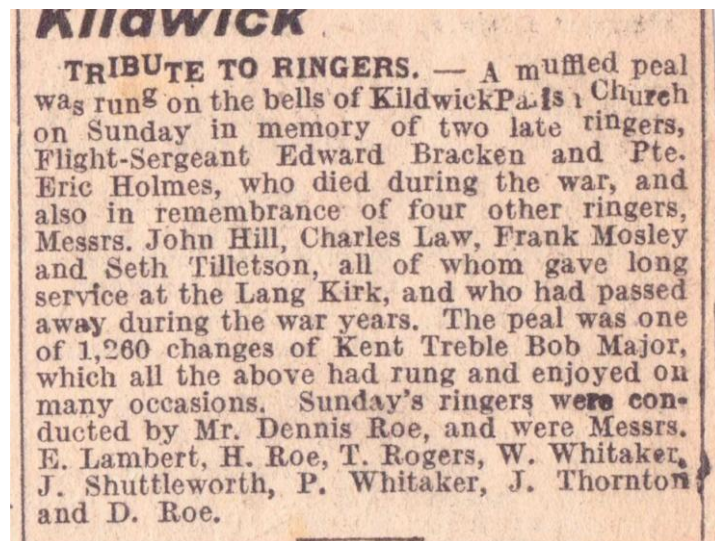
What may be the only known photograph of John Hill is shown below, taken on an allotment at the top of Mary Street with the Kildwick Gas Works in the background. John is stood on the right; the man bending down is Harry Wilcock, his nephew.



Photograph of Harry Wilcock (left) and John Hill (right)  
By kind permission of Charles Wilcock

## Postscript

After the end of World War 2, when church bells could be rung again, John Hill was commemorated with a muffled peal on St. Andrew's bells.



Craven Herald, date unknown (probably Summer 1945)

By kind permission of Craven Herald

John's half-sister, Kate Wilcock, died in 1942, aged 72; her husband Richard died in 1947, aged 78. Their daughter Florence, the last of the children still living at home, also died in 1947 and 11 Mary Street was then sold to the Farnhill WW1 Volunteer George Holliday and his second wife, Gertrude.

John Hill did not marry and there are no direct descendants. A number of the children of John's brother Fred are known to have married and it is likely that some of their descendants are still living in the area.



## John Hill – a life in summary

**Born:** 11/7/1875, Farnhill

**Baptised:** 29/8/1875, Kildwick

**Died:** 26/1/1940; buried 30/1/1940, Kildwick St. Andrew's      **Aged:** 64

**Home address:** 11 Mary Street, Farnhill

### Parents

**Father:** Anthony Holmes Hill; b. 20/8/1829, Farnhill;  
bapt. 6/9/1829, Kildwick; d. 20/12/1901, Farnhill

**Mother:** Elizabeth (nee English); b. 1845 Thurstonfield, Cumbria;  
bapt. 2/2/1845, Burgh-by-Sands, Cumberland;  
d. 29/1/1917, Farnhill; buried 1/2/1917, Kildwick

**Married:** 1874, Skipton (Registration district)

### Siblings

Mary Isabella Davy (half-sister); b. 8/1/1868, Keighley; bapt. 23/2/1868, Kildwick;  
m. Thomas Whiteoak, 5/9/1892, Kildwick; d. 9/12/1932, Farnhill

Kate Davy (half-sister); b. 24/8/1869, Farnhill; m. Richard Wilcock, 21/4/1894, Kildwick;  
d. 1947, Staincliffe (Registration district)

Fred; b. 1/12/1876, Farnhill; m. Sarah Anne Maskew, 25/8/1900, Kildwick

George; b. 25/12/1878, Farnhill

### WW1 service

Service details not known.

