

The Long Journey to Christmas in Farnhill.

Two thousand years ago three kings travelled for days to see the new born baby Jesus and to celebrate his birth. They followed a star. They crossed deserts, travelled through inhospitable environments, and often travelled at night to bring their gifts to the new baby.

Farnhill Parish Council is on a similar but longer journey.

It started in late summer 2013. The council decided it would like to celebrate Christmas in the village by erecting a Christmas tree with lights in the traditional manner.

“We should have the tree on the grassed area by the canal at the bottom of Main Street” said some councillors.

“Not likely. It should be on the triangle of land at the junction of Main Street and Silsden Road”, argued others.

“What do we want to bother with a tree for at all?” questioned others.

“We need the local authority lighting officer to advise us” was the consensus.

The journey had begun.

The local authority was approached. Their officer made a visit and made his recommendation.

Acting on the advice, the council decided the grassed area by the canal was the most suitable site. Electricity could be extended from the heritage street lamp alongside the wall just above the culvert. Permission would need to be sought from The Canal and Rivers trust. The Local authority would be asked for a price to install a supply. We would liaise between the two.

Christmas 2013 came and went. No tree for Farnhill in Christmas 2013.

The journey had thus far been three months but still there was no sight of the destination. Unlike the three Kings who had only to overcome the perils of their route, the council had encountered the fiercest of 21st century obstacles; regulation, health and safety and bureaucracy.

Not to be dissuaded from the task, the council decided to persevere. It would continue to address and resolve all the health and safety, regulation and bureaucratic obstacles that might stand in its way.

Christmas Festivities would even be a standing item on the monthly agenda. Farnhill would have its tree by Christmas 2014. The village would be alight with celebratory colour bringing joy and good cheer to all parishioners.

And so, over eleven more long months the council has continued on its difficult and tiresome journey, never once losing sight of its objective.

The kings had the star, the council has the star on the Christmas tree.

In those eleven months endless letters, emails and phone calls have passed back and forth between the Council, the Canal and Rivers Trust and the Local Authority.

- Questions have been asked and answered.
- Answers have generated more questions.
- Information has been shared
- Issues have been resolved which have led to more questions and issues.
- Method statements have been requested and prepared.
- Risk assessments have been undertaken
- Quotes have been requested, provided and accepted
- Responsibilities have been clarified
- Insurance cover has been secured
- Documents have been requested which have been long in their preparation and which having been provided have then raised more questions and requests.
- Personnel have changed leaving gaps in continuity.
- Levels of decision making have delayed decisions.
- Works programming have promoted delays
- Hair has been torn from heads which can little afford the loss.

Sadly, we now know that our objective will not be achieved for Christmas 2014.
Farnhill will not be aglow with Christmas festive lights this year.
No Christmas tree for Farnhill in 2014

BUT. The council is tenacious. The journey will continue.
Who knows, by Christmas 2015 we may be at journeys end.
We may (nay WILL) have a tree by Christmas 2015.

After all how many months (years) can it take for three public bodies to actually install a light bulb?

