

Historic Farnsfield

The first record of the village is in 956 AD when it was called Fernefeld. In the Domesday Book the village is referred to as Franesfeld or Farnesfeld and is stated to be owned by Walter D'Ayncourt. By the twelfth century the village's name had become established as Farnsfield.

As to its meaning, there are two schools of thought – one states it means “Fields of Fern”, the other that it was a “clearing with ferns in the forest”. Certainly up to 1600 and probably beyond, the village was within the boundary of Sherwood Forest and was subject to Forest Laws. Gradually encroachments into the forest, then the Enclosure Act Award of 1777 pushed the forest boundary back and Farnsfield came to lie outside the boundaries of the forest.

Places of interest

- 1. The Old Wheatsheaf**
The Old Wheatsheaf was built as a farm between 1625 and 1650 and it later became a Public House. It was very much the centre of village activity and has been the meeting place for the Cycling Club of Great Britain and also the Home Guard.
- 2. Quaker Lane**
In the 17th century the village was one of the local strongholds of Quakerism. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers may well have spent time here. Quaker Lane was so named as it was in this area that the majority of the Quakers lived.
- 3. Atherleys Bakery**
The bakery is reputed to be the oldest domestic building in the village, dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is probable that it originated as a farm and that it was converted to domestic use following the Enclosure Act of 1777. It contains medieval timbers.
- 4. The Halifax Bomber Memorial**
The Farnsfield Memorial marks the spot where Halifax Bomber MZ519 – LKU crashed on the 6th July 1944 while returning from a mission over occupied territory. All seven members of the crew lost their lives. An impressive engraved stone stands in a copse of seven English oak trees and two Canadian maples. A display board provides photographs and all the background information.
- 5. St Michael's and All Angels Church**
There has been a church on this site since the 15th Century. All that remains of it from around that period is the font and part of the tower. A fire in the 1850s destroyed much of that church. The present building is a fine example of the work of the Victorian Architects; Hine and Evans, being completed in 1862.
- 6. Farnsfield Hall**
Farnsfield Hall is built on the site of a late 16th or early 17th Century building of much smaller size. It is believed that the existing hall was built for the Houldsworth family in around 1810 and it remained in the family until at least 1899. Although greatly altered over the years, some of the internal features of the original building have been retained.
- 7. The Village Lock Up**
This lock up is one of the last, and perhaps plainest, of its kind in the county. It was last used in earnest in the early twentieth century. Its door and window are still capable of holding in miscreants.
- 8. The Village Centre**
The Village Centre on New Hill probably dates from the early 1800s when it was built as a Maltings or Malt House. The building was donated to the village by Sir Stuart Goodwin. It was converted to a village hall in 1949 and was refurbished in 1995.
- 9. The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel**
The first chapel on Station Lane opened in 1799 but it became inadequate for the growing congregation. The present chapel, which was built by subscription, opened on Tuesday 28th April 1829. The Wesleyan Day School at the rear of the Chapel opened in 1840 and closed in 1969 when the Walter D'Ayncourt Primary School was built.
- 10. Hexgreave Hall**
Hexgreave Hall Estate is a privately owned business park having extensive grounds that include a lake and a deer park. In 1240 it belonged to the de Hekkesgrave family but by 1255 it was in the possession of the Archbishop of York. The present hall was built between 1750 and 1760. The Hall and deer park may be viewed from public footpaths.
- 11. The Southwell Trail**
The site now known as The Southwell Trail once carried the East Midland Railway line from Rolleston via Southwell to Mansfield. The line opened in April 1871 and became renowned for slow services. Passenger services were few, although goods trains carrying coal etc. were more common. The line was closed in 1968 and is now used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Because of its wildlife interest has been designated a Local Nature Reserve.
- 12. The Pumping Station**
The Pumping Station was built in the 1890s by the Newark Water Company. The station abstracted water from the underlying Bunter Sandstone for use in Newark's brewing trade. Nowadays most of the water is piped to Nottingham.

Further information about the history and heritage of Farnsfield can be found on the Farnsfield Local History Society website www.farnsfieldlhs.co.uk

The information for this panel was kindly provided by Farnsfield Local History Society