

### DAVE ALLEN

---

I've had a bit of a love affair with Beacon Hill since the day I first saw it. That day was Wednesday 20th May 1981 when I arrived, art folder in hand, for a job interview. As I got off the train and looked up I thought *now **that's** a hill.*

At this point I could elaborate on many interesting things about Beacon Hill, some of them physical (it's 260 metres above sea level for starters) and some of them historical, like the execution of criminals on the beacon. Or the history and uses of the beacon as a signal, or the industry-fuelled deforestation of the hillside.

But I won't, because I want to talk about my favourite Halifax landmark *as a landmark*. Weirdly, I can hardly better this historical source when trying to describe its power as a landmark.<sup>1</sup>

### BEACON HILL

#### The Silent Sentinel of Halifax

Only a bare, brown, weather-beaten old hill, but dear to the hearts of thousands of Halifax people - especially those who have left the place of their nativity for "fresh woods and pastures new." Time was, and that not so very long ago, when it "stood dressed in living green," but alas and alack, its vernal glory has departed.

It is undoubtedly the most prominent feature of the Halifax landscape. From almost any point of the principal streets, which for the most part run at right angles to it, the landmark may be seen.

That's it really. If you are in the town centre it tends to be in your field of view, albeit in a subliminal sort of way. We don't usually acknowledge it as we walk across Sainsbury's car park or down King Edward Street, but it's there. As you drop towards the 'bottom of town' you can't really avoid its presence and the railway station offers the best in-your-face view. Nor

is it visible from the town centre alone. Go to many outlying districts and it's visible: from the moor at Savile Park it sits, visible in the distance behind St. Jude's Church, for example.

But there's more. The orienting help on a wide geographic scale that Beacon Hill gives is supplemented by other satellite landmarks, offering a kind of triangulation for us to know where we are. The chimney at the Nestlé factory is the most visible, but Halifax Minster, the railway station and Eureka! all do the same kind of thing. Sometimes a couple of them will do a double-act in front of Beacon Hill, reinforcing things further still.

---

1. I can't properly reference this quotation. I found it, unreferenced, online: here's the reference for the website.  
BEAUMONT. G. 2023. *Beacon Hill*. Website. <http://www.halifaxpeople.com/Beacon-Hill.html>. 20th August 2023.

---

© Dave Allen

20th August 2023