

ANN HILL RESEARCH

(Final interview

2.3.1987)

Interview with Mr & Mrs Moffat and Mrs A.Y. Johnston

I'd arranged to see Mr Moffat about the history of the business, but he thought his aunt would know more, and had invited her from Lockerbie for the evening, and most of the talk was with her. Mrs Johnston (nee Moffat), aged 82, taught - mainly at Lochmaben - and was one of the few who remember the Hill girls.

Mrs Moffat is the daughter of Mr Rogerson (Williamsfield), but I did not know that till the end, or I would have asked her about her grandfather, who was a prominent church elder. She gave a lovely supper.

I felt guilty about coming on the night of Scotland v Eire, but Mr Moffat isn't a football follower, and anyway it turned out to be a total disaster!

Their house is an example of local work, being built by Whites. Without having any building expertise, I'd say it reminded me strongly of R.K. Brown Houses in Dumfries.

They have a number of old photographs.

NB Information is from Mrs Johnston unless otherwise stated.

School

She knew Natalie Hill from going to school from Kirtlebridge - and Annie slightly. Natalie was fair, Annie darker. Also on the Lockerbie train were a boy Miller from Branteth (who still drives - George Moffat), a lad who had asthma. The Hills no doubt would cycle to the station. The train left (Kirkpatrick Fleming ?) about 8.55, and didn't reach Lockerbie till well after 9.00, so the school times were altered to accomodate the railway timetable. For the first two years they had to change at Kirtlebridge and await the 'express' as they called it, which - unlike the 'local' had corridors.

A few other children cycled to Annan Academy - such as Lizzie Harkness (but see later), a great character, who will now be over 90 (lives with daughter in Sherwood Park, Lockerbie). Another contemporary was John Davidson of Hayfield, who was in the same class at Kirkpatrick Fleming, and who went to Lockerbie.

A lot of homework, especially Latin, was done in the train, for you got a row if your Latin was wrong. She later qualified to teach Latin, English and French, but seemed nonetheless to feel that Latin had been a bit of

a waste, that German or Italian, would have been better. And, of course, she got a job in primary teaching.

You had to go to Dumfries Academy if you wanted a bursary to Edinburgh University, so she made the transfer and - extraordinarily as it might seem to anyone who has not experienced Dumfries Academy, 'Yon bossy Rector' Mr Critchley insisted that she must re-sit the Highers she had already passed at Lockerbie. (I wonder if such restrictions affected Annie Hill and stopped her going to further education?). So she didn't let on she had Higher Science, and was able to drop it, but she did Latin, as her sister had done before, for the teacher remarked of her handwriting that, unlike her sister's, 'Yours doesn't go up to heaven'.

John Davidson presumably also came to Dumfries, for he went on to Glasgow University.

She went to Lockerbie a year early, (possibly because her parents were fed up with her knocking things over in the shop!) so her father had to pay for a season's ticket ~~for which was written '£5 per annum + fortnight at end of year'~~. But she sat the exam at Lockerbie and got the bursary, which paid your fare, the next year. Also at Lockerbie were the Martindales (Wee Woodhouse), her older sister, Barbara, and Clarence Davidson. This started us talking about the Davidsons. Harold and Syd (who went to ? Eagleswick) were both very clever, and Mabel was a teacher. She died in Carlisle.

Her first teacher was not Miss Crooks. It may have been Miss Graham. Whoever it was was stern, and used to send a different child - one of the older ones - to pay the papers each day. At the end of the week she would reward the messengers with a box of chocolates or sweeties.

I have a story which is a little garbled. I think there was a young teacher who used to come to their shop, and one day, expecting to meet her sweetheart gave a man a huge and passionate hug only to discover that it was the local policeman. Much embarrassed! This may have been Miss McNish.

Mr Christie drank occasionally, and was frequently out of the room. On such occasions she would sometimes while away the time by studying a glass wall case which explained how cotton was made. She didn't remember the story (see Mrs A) about him and the whins. She remembered a boy who lived at Cove Lodge dying of diphtheria, and that the ambulance used to come to take

which cost £5,  
with a fortnight's 'bonus'  
+ the end of the year.

Pull Anderson

away children with scarlet fever. (A horse drawn ambulance.)

When she went to Edinburgh she sometimes baby sat for Mr Mc Kerchar, who had a permanent post with the army and lived in Edinburgh (but not, she thought, Glencorse or Redford).

Mr Moffat was taught by Mrs Irving and Miss Douglas from Carlisle. Miss Douglas had been at Moniaive, where she taught his mother. Mrs Irving taught his father and himself - and also Mrs Moffat, who liked her. Miss Douglas frightened him. She used to come in a 3 carriage train which they called 'Spuggy's train', that being her nickname. The headmaster, Sydney Hope, had a son David in the class who cut the belt up one day. Sydney Hope went to Hoddum. He had a very clever daughter. I think Mrs Moffat had Mr Mitchell and also 'a great big man whose son was run over'. Mr Ferguson would be the last teacher to live in the schoolhouse.

Of course they got up to a lot of mischief on the train. There was one lucky occasion when a girl escaped relatively unhurt after putting her head right through the window. She'd left her bag in the train at the station and was <sup>rushing</sup> hurrying to get it back. ~~She remembered them going to the sewing teacher after that - she being the person who sorted things out.~~ (Ann Thomson, married Jocky Johnston the clogger).

At Christmas they always put on an operatta at Kirkpatrick Fleming and Lizzie Harkness was always the baddie. When she went to Lockerbie Mr Walker told the minister there that she was really talented.

When Mr Christie was away the class sometimes persuaded Charlie Mackie to sing. He had a repertoire of - I gather - comic, or perhaps vulgar songs which he'd picked up.

At Kirkpatrick Fleming she had no pupil-teachers, nor ever acted as such, but quite a few of her 6th year Dumfries Academy contemporaries were. She taught for 3 months in Lockerbie, then Lochmaben. Her sister taught Maths. She thought her sister was for a time at Dumfries Academy.

As a child her mother would not allow her to use the soup kitchen, because they lived right beside it. Occasionally, as a special treat, she'd get some of the soup.

I think she said she got the strap only once.

(before the train left.  
They took the girl to the  
ewing teacher, who was  
the person at Lockerbie  
academy who dealt  
with mis-haps of all  
kinds -



Geordie (1) started as a clogger, also selling big boots and, later, bikes. He died in 1929 after a month's illness with kidney trouble. George (2) and Tom then ran the business, with Minnie doing the books in her spare time after teaching at Lochmaben. George was more into mechanics, Tom the groceries. Before pumps they were the first to sell petrol between Lockerbie and Carlisle, in 2 gallon cans. The petrol was kept in a sunken brick (floored?) house in the garden. At that time there were more motor bikes than cars (Mrs Johnston didn't like motor bikes). Jim Davidson, for example, who lived next the Noons, went to work by motor bike, and might take people to the doctor, although it was better if you went with Mr Coltart, the blacksmith, who had a car. Taking someone to the doctor involved hunting through the district, perhaps as far as Waterbeck, till you ran Doctor Christie to earth on his rounds. Mrs Johnston got her own first car some time after her father died, second-hand (ASM 411 - which would be about 1935).

George Moffat - Skyview photographs show the shop and pumps as they were in 1958. The dual carriageway hit petrol sales. His father had been worried lest it ruin the business, and he'd been turned down for a filling station on the new road. The petrol pumps were originally in front of the shop, and were moved about 1979/80 for safety.

The business now consists of the shop, car repairs, petrol and car sales. The cars bring in most money, there being little profit in groceries.

The cloggers shop used to be a great social centre (see Dave Mitchell). The minister (Fyffe?) used to say he'd like to know what went on there at nights, but he couldn't give the right sign.

They had a house at the back where they kept bikes. I got the impression that the cycle shop may have arisen by chance. Mr Moffat made a bike for her older sister, and kept things to do with bikes in the shop, so it was natural to start selling and repairing bikes, which he probably assembled himself. Ladies bikes had cords to keep their clothes out of danger.

Her father had a very good clogger working for him, a man from Ecclefechan. She remembers clogs being made for Dundee Equitable in Dalbeattie. Then at dinner time the children would come in to get their calkers fixed. They had the Ecclefechan man for several winters, and also a part-time worker who worked in the blacksmith's shop as well. From a very early point they also sold shoes - before they sold bikes. And they

mended boots. People had sparables - rows of nails in their boots, which needed renewal. They got their leather from Scott of Wigton who just recently went out of business.

She occasionally looked after the shop. One day she'd been left in charge with strict instructions not to leave the shop unattended, when someone came in and asked for a stamp, which they weren't licensed to sell, so she wasn't sure what to do, and she couldn't leave the shop to ask, and she knew only the customers nickname, - so she shouted, much to everyone's embarrassment, 'can ye gie Fish a stamp?'

They also sold papers - 2d for the 'Glasgow Herald', 1d for the others. She remembered going one day to collect them from the station. The signal box man wanted one, so did the others, and by the time she got to the shop, full of people waiting for their paper, she had only 3 left. A common paper was D.C. Thomson's 'Glasgow Weekly News' - asked for by 'Gie me a Dundee!'

Mrs Moffat had wanted her son Tom to go into a bank, but he was determined to be a grocer. He, I think, had served his time with Coopers.

Her father never drove a car, although he had one of his own in the garage when he died. Mrs Johnston's first car cost £20. She married in 1936, and travelled daily.

They thought the last clogger would be at Newton. George (2) sold all his equipment and material for £5 to a man in Brampton.

The postman was at one time nicknamed 'Clogger' - Clogger Johnstone.

Mr Moffat used to look after the garage, and his brother Hamish, a good salesman, did the shop and books. He opens and closes at 6 p.m., and has good women who look after the shop most of the time. They used to close at 8 p.m., as did his father, and sometimes when the A.74 was so jam packed that you couldn't cross the road they'd be open till Friday midnight. It was only relatively recently that car dealing became a significant part of the business.

One of the main problems is to compete with Chapelcross to secure good mechanics. At present he employs 2 men, a boy and a self-employed panel beater (on a % basis). Mr Moffat hadn't finished serving his time (as a mechanic) when his father died.

Other Shops  
& Businesses

Wayside Garage, more haulage, employ 6 men.

Agripoint may repair agricultural machinery.

Milly Halliday's father used to call with a cart which had a basket slung underneath. People used to imitate his strong dialect - 'Whaur are ye gan wi' this?' - the answer 'I'm taking it to Iyell Mary Jane' (Ighell = little).  
Igh-ell

The quarry. She can recall the morning noise of the quarry worker's feet (clogs?). It closed about 75 years ago. At one time, she understood, they stored dynamite in Bruce's Cave.

Hotel - several owners. Probably bought Nissen hut for garage. They didn't like it, as children, when the pub came out, especially if there were soldiers. Some local worthies were familiar - like the one-armed Davie Rome, who went round with a threshing mill and could drive a car. He'd an old Tin Lizzie. Once they were going to Moniaive (where her mother came from) and Davie Rome offered them a lift to Dumfries, which her parents insisted on taking, much to her dismay - for he was often drunk. But, as they said, they were only going, not coming back with him, and it made an enormous difference to the journey, for you could catch an earlier train.

She doesn't think Bella Noon sold papers. Mr Noon was a gamekeeper, pretty hopeless in the shop because he never knew where anything was. When Bella was away Mrs Johnston would go to the shop and ask for something, 'Where the Hell is't?' he'd say. When she'd teased him enough she'd tell him where it was. I've got the family history, but not written clearly. I think it was her (Bella's) son who was very tall and worked in insurance in Carlisle, and was friendly with Tom Moffat. There was Harry - who was clever - and Peggy (who wasn't clever, and had a slight speech impediment, so she'd call 'Hally, come home for your tea'.) Not many years ago she was working in a big London store.

There used to be a water pump in front of the house, which leaked. They got their water there.

After the Poor House became an old people's home Mrs Moffat (George Moffat's mother) used to make things for their tea.

There are no meals on wheels in Kirkpatrick Fleming.

Miscellaneous Bessie and Jenny Graham. Bessie the older, book-keeper, secretary of this and that, great with rural. In choir. Not a big house, but beautiful flowers, shaven grass.

She regarded 'Bruce's Cave' legends as nonsense - but Ritchie is convinced it's true.

P At coronation George Moffat and his brother won a fancy dress competition judged by Johnston the station master (S) - dressed as pages. He'd been hurt when a crane, Mr John hit his leg. <sup>His wife</sup> She died just lately.

Quintinshill. She remembers vividly she used to take a paper - possibly to the manse - and hated crossing the bridge, which was slippery in winter. This day a man at the signal box said, tell your father there's been an accident at Quintinshill, and twenty people killed. Her mother was at the time in Mrs Graham's V.A.D. So they told her older sister to ask Willie Hodgson (?) to look after the shop, and cycled down to Gretna with old sheets tied to the bikes. They weren't back till midnight. (It was widely thought that the man who got the shorter sentence was the more to blame.)

A motoring adventure. As she was approaching Merkland a man jumped over the wall and held up his hand for her to stop, but she couldn't. At night she was asked, 'Did you see the thief from Robgill', to which she replied, 'I nearly killed him!'

She was brought up across the road from their present house.

I've made notes about Ina Sinclair (in connection with Jock Johnstone ?)

Photographs. Mr and Mrs Moffat have a large collection of photographs, including Skyviews of Williamsfield and the Hotel and Garage, school groups, and photos of the family and shop.

#### ADDENDA

Mrs Johnston

26th February 1987

School

Mrs Johnston remarked that the school playground was pretty bad - very rough, sharply sloping. The master's garden went down to Burnholm i.e. to the burn, which is no longer apparent because Agripoint have landscaped it. She imagined toilet facilities would be pretty



primitive, but couldn't remember. There was 'a shed without any walls' which let in as much rain as it kept out. She was now fairly sure of her teachers - Graham, then McNish.

When she was in the first infants class the other class - infants 11, I suppose, - was being taught a new method of reading - by 'sounding', i.e. phonetic.

Miscellaneous Her mother was a Little from Moniaive, whose father, crippled from polio, had started a grocer's delivery there similar to Sanderson at Irvington. She thought her father's parents worked on a farm around Eskdalemuir. He was, she thought, a farm manager, but both her paternal grandparents died when he was about 3 years old.

Economic Her father bought in clog wood, didn't cut it locally. No, it wasn't seasonal, in fact her uncle (can't remember which, possibly father's younger brother) used sometimes to work for them for 2/3 weeks in summer. Noon's was a grocer's shop, there's wasn't until later.  
-keirs

(2.3.1987) Mrs Johnston added a lot about different Kirkpatrick Fleming families:-

Broatch in Duns KELLYRIG, a nice, steady family from whom they used to buy butter and buttermilk. One was tall, the other small.

Gass. She thought there were 3 of them, who always were late for church because they took their dinner first. would come in during first psalm. (Jim Johnstone got the farm through his mother, who was said to be an illegitimate child of Gass.) Jim Johnstone's sister Lizzie Johnstone was 'canny', died suddenly just after coming to the shop (Jean Moffat, Hamish's wife had offered to bring her dinner, found her dead on her bed. Lizzie Johnstone was very friendly with the present George Moffat's mother.) Her son sometimes drives the mini-bus for them.

Willie Rogerson was very quiet. His main interest was probaly farming.

One of the biggest changes was when sewers replaced septic tanks, but they still had the pump outside the house, which gave very hard water. Her mother used to suffer from migraines and would ask for a cup of tea - but insisted it must be made with 'the right water', i.e. the hard stuff. Her mother lived a long time after her father, who was a great reader - 'Tales of the Borders', she remembered. Great hiker too.

Hynd. Family did very well. Mrs Hynd had been teacher before marriage. Douglas and another boy, one went to Gretna, one to Carlisle. Really brainy. One became an engineer. Father signalman beside Cove.

Ed/ Farish - nice family - used to get milk there - Newton. Retired, went to Eastriggs where he'd built a house for his 2 sisters (she thought). Succeeded by family whose name she's forgotten, about the time they played tennis there. The daughter was in her final year as a 'Medic'. Then Jim Connel.

Bella Noon's shop was just the size of a small room. Georgie Ritchie's at Newton was a much bigger grocer's. She understood there had been opposition from within his family to his marriage to Miss Anderson.

Across from Ritchie's, Wallace. They sat 2 behind Wallaces in church - 'Come on and we'll see what hat Jean's got the day'. She'd so many different hats, they used to say she must take them out of the shop and put them back in. There was also a Kate Wallace. She thought Nat had no family.

There must have been a church/shop thing. She remembered remarking that so and so, who lived nearby, didn't get groceries. 'You'll never see her in the shop, she goes to Pincod Church'. The Pincod people were thought to be a little exclusive or superior - and, says Mrs Johnston, it wasn't they, it was we who thought them superior. some of the farming class were inclined to be hoity-toity.

A little more about the Moffat family tree - her big sister was called Barbara after her mother's mother. She was to be Agnes, if a girl (father's mother) or Willie - but her mother didn't like the name Agnes, so she became Williamina, but was always called 'Min'.

The Hill girls were nice. Not - like some - that would push you in the train. Her sister, Barbara, used to talk to Annie.

She got a prize for being best girl in the class before moving up to the top teacher. A boy Kennedy from Merkland got the boy's prize. The way it was put, it was as if the teacher provided the books herself.

They also got lots of Sunday School prizes - often books that were really too advanced.

In her 5th year at Lockerbie she won Works of Shakespeare for being first in Latin, French and perhaps other subjects.

Peggy Rogerson, Beth's aunt, married Irving Davidson of Hayfield, died not long after her Silver Wedding at Dryfesdale Hotel. (She'd a story about being by chance in the hotel, meeting Mick (Jim) Davidson, but missing John. I got the feeling that she and John Davidson may have been rather fond of each other). Irving Davidson had 2 boys.

(Bob Sloan, who shouldn't drive, was in his early days stand-offish. But Violet, wife, nice natured. Agnes Sloan (sister) OK, but his other sister was queer, needed looking after, lived all life with Bob.)

George Moffat (2) daft on motor bikes - we all drove his first 2-stroke up and down Poor House Loaning, using feet as brakes, often dangerously. Then he got a bigger bike (no side car). Mrs Graham of Mossknow saw him on it, asked if he'd drive her car - Daimler (?) - which he then did every Saturday to bring milk from a farm on Dumfries side of Annan. Mossknow insisted on getting special milk. Her mother had been housemaid at Mossknow before marriage, always got on very well with the family, who would rely on the Moffats in emergencies. Once Jimmy Graham and his mother were in Ayrshire car accident, taken to Ballochmyle. Mrs Graham contacted Tom and George to get them to pay the Mossknow wages for her till they got back. Mrs Graham organised knitting for soldiers in war. Mrs Graham was in W.R.I. and had been President; so was Mrs Fleming of Woodhouse, and there developed an animosity between them, at one time when Mrs Johnstone was Secretary and was trying to keep the peace.

Sydney Davidson went to Giggleswick, not Eagleswick. Harold married daughter of MacDonald, gamekeeper.

Clog business would stop c 1931. She got her first car soon after her father died - a bulldog-nosed Morris for £20. They were extending the house when father died. A cottage further on in the row is now demolished.

George Thomson used to repair shoes for them when they had an overflow of demand.

Pete Johnston, village joiner, very good, would never cheat you (but terrible drinker, so try to give money to his wife. Once Min was hunting for him, found him lying behind door.) She thought he'd formerly worked for a bigger firm.

Miss Gilles of Post Office used to go to Pincod. Married Mark Simpson.

Eagleshams. Jimmy and she in Edinburgh at same time.  
Eric red hot Labour - used to say terrible things at  
Dumfries and Galloway Debating Society (Edinburgh).  
Minister died young, local farmers helped bring up the  
4 boys.

Mabel Donaldson (adopted) went to school with her.