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Interview with Mr and Mrs Bell
Broats

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Mr Bell was born in a cottage at Broats in 1940 but was brought up mainly at Hangingshaw from the age of 5, where his father went, leaving his 2 brothers to run Broats. Mr Bell returned to Broats 9 years ago. He and his wife are keen on wildlife - so they don't shoot pheasants. Although Mr Bell has not lived long in the parish, Broats has been a family property for many years, and they have an estate map of 1851.

A number of points which come up are mentioned briefly, in Mr Wallace's report.

Main items - Broats, the Bell family.

School Mr Bell was at Kirkpatrick Fleming school for only 2/3 weeks. His older sister Margaret (born 1932) who lives at Riddings often talks about Kirkpatrick Fleming school. But at Applegarth he was taught by Miss Barclay, was one of her favourites, who persuaded him to go to Wallace Hall. When he last heard she was in one of the Hill Street flats in Dumfries - he thought of her as being very intelligent, and mentioned that she had a Russian associate.

Church The Bells are pretty regular church attenders, and he was invited (but refused) to be an elder. They did not have much to say about the history (recent or otherwise) about the church.

Economic He remembered a shop at Irvington - and a wee sweetie shop (at Hollee ?).

Hollie tacks with Broathill - see farms.

Sport and Entertainment Mr and Mrs Bell used to ride. Long ago the hunt sometimes met at Broats. They still have a pony, but just as a pet.

They don't let the shooting.

The Bells have an athletic tradition. R T Bell won a lot of sports cups as a boy at Merchiston - his speciality being the 'long leap'. At one time, too, he went in for point-to-point races, and they have 2 cups, dated 1889 and 1900. He - or perhaps his brother, won the Open race at Roberthill (Point-to-Point, Dumfriesshire Hunt). His father was a sports champion at Annan and he himself won the mile at Wallace Hall - but their children show no inclination to carry on the sporting tradition.

BROATHHILL

Farms and
Farmers

Broats is, and was, mainly a sheep farm - 500 ewes. His two uncles also reared quite a lot of heifer dairy replacements - bought in as stirks. In the last 4 years they've moved towards continental beef cattle. Broats used to win a lot of prizes both for sheep and cattle, and still sometimes do. He gave me details of the flock, which I've not taken down, but I think it is mainly cross-bred Cheviots and Suffolks. They would show at Lockerbie and Dumfries, although his uncles rarely showed.

He is the 4th generation of Bells in Broats. Some family history will come later, but the Broats sequence is this:-

1. George 1880/90s - *with 30 appears to be the 30 of Bell Park*
2. R T (his grandfather)
3. Lewis (father), Dod and Jimmy
4. Dod and Jimmy alone, 1945
5. Dod alone c 1966-77
6. Present owners 1977 -

They have a letter from McDonald and Roddick to R T Bell about the estate of John Bell, who died in 1901. Addressed to Robert T Bell, Broats, it says that 'you paid for Broats in 1907 £10,644, on the basis of a valuation by David Kirkpatrick and W H Veitch in September 1905 (but they were already tenants). Burdens on the estate were loans for £6,000 (Edinburgh Merchant Company) and £500 at 4% from Mrs Longmuir. But, according to the letter, the estate went for £21,000 and £19,000 at Public Roup in 1862 and 1863. Why it was so much less in 1907 is not stated: certainly there was a decline in values after 1880, but *not* no to that extent; more likely the estate had been reduced in size - unless I have mis-read the letter. The same letter says that his father got Prestonhall in 1882 for £6,850 and sold it to his (R T Bell's) brother, William for about £4,950. I also have written 'bought by present owner 1913 £4,550', which seems to relate to Prestonhall.

Broathill, it says, includes the Hollee tack, was bought by his father in 1881 for £5,250 and sold to his brother George for £3,875, with burdens of £52.10/- to Mrs George Bell, and a bond for £750.

John Bell also, I think, bought Gullielands in 1880 (£4,000) and sold it to George in 1907 for £3,200).

The letter says that Hollee tack duties were £32.9.1 per annum, and the rents of the small field(s) of Broathill were £16 per annum.

The house had a 1742 datestone under the porch ^{which} was

FIELD NAMES

built on. Some farm buildings are very old. Rob Proctor, their workman, who lives in one of the cottages, says there was once a smiddy at Cleuchside.

The oldest water supply was Jock's Hole, behind the house, reputedly an old iron spring, probably drunk for health. It tastes very bitter, with a lot of oxide so that if the sheep fall into the trough across the road to the yard they come out orange, and the troughs have to be cleaned out once a year. (It goes by a pipe through the orchard, across the road.) They think that flagstones at the back door (since removed) marked the site of a well. The main well, at the back of the field, gives a good supply of clear water, even in drought years.

The farm has a bit of peat moss, an extension of Nutberry, which he tried to use for cattle last year before deciding it would cost too much.

At the top of the farm the soil is blacker, and the ditches have gravel bottoms.

We discussed the field names and old cottages. Across the road at Frank's Field - probably called after a cattleman, are the remains of a house (On Creca road). The drains in this field are very old but still work well - tiled, pipe and collar type, running in opposite directions (could this suggest formerly two separate fields?).

Jock's Hole, which is fenced off, may be 5 feet deep.

In Frank's Field there's a lot of sandstone and rubble.

The fields have been altered a great deal, with fences taken out, and the wood cut down. We counted about 30 fields in the 1851 map; now there are 19 plus the moss.

Scotsfield (Scott's Field), I have noted, is 551 acres.

There was a stockman's house on the track to Cove at the far north of the farm - a stone house with a clay floor. (Would this be North Angle?) There was another house beside the pond - which they had filled in.

Compared with the 1851 map the then 'Meadow' has reverted to moss, and the farm cottages are now east of the Dornock Burn. In 1851 the farm was possessed by Mr Fergusson (one of the authorities in the O.S. Name Book) and owned by John Ferguson esquire.

Some of what would appear to be original ditches are still there, some filled in.

The field outside the house is called 'The Orchard' - which refers to around 50 years ago.

The Jail Field and Low Jail Fields - no real idea why so called.

There used to be a footpath through the moss to the gate at the Wee Flosch Field.

Near the Flosch-Broathill boundary, at the highest point on that side of the farm, is the platform of a height finder, which is possibly connected with the airfield.

There are no signs of the smiddy below the road, but he'd heard that remains had been found in ploughing.

They now grow about 110 acres of grass for silage and pasture, 75 to 80 acres barley (for feeding the sheep). He started silage about 1980. Before that 40/50 acres barley, turnips and hay. The cattle go mainly to the Dumfries F M C, the sheep to Longtown and Annan, but they do some private trading, mainly Suffolk cross ewe lambs for breeding.

His father used to say there were lots of rabbits on the farm. There are foxes in the moss, and near Cove. A mole catcher comes every year and gets about 60 or 70 in 2 or 3 days. There are also badgers, barn owls, jays, woodpeckers and squirrels.

They have some old farm machinery - such as an old clipping machine, and an old gig. He talked too about an old cake maker and a bruiser, old and rusting, but I don't know if this survives. Broats is a listed building. The small old fashioned window panes had to be taken out after special permission. The yard, too, had some old buildings, including a dangerous dovecot which he'd taken down before he knew he shouldn't. He was asked about it. There is also the building which housed the steam driven threshing mill (mentioned in 'Name Book' - but he'd heard of it being in use much later). But he knows of no ice house. Most of the buildings were built of stone from their now unused quarry, behind the cottages next Dornock Burn (Creca Road).

The house used to have flagstone floors in the kitchen and elsewhere - and there was no water in the kitchen. The water was in an outbuilding at the back of the house, where there is still the big old wash house boiler. Part of the farm was taken over as an airfield in World War 2 - see miscellaneous - probably about 200 acres altogether.

There used to be a road to Irvington, now private, with gates at each end, on Council's agreement - but he's quite happy for people to use it.

Remains of ancient monument - S D D letter, 7.12.1976, with map.

Miscellaneous

The airfield. For training pilots in World War 2 - wood cut down for. Little remains - odd cement hut base, hangers probably sold off. He believes they flew old Gypsy Moths, certainly very small planes. Probably some officers were billeted on the farm, and there must have been a camp and mess huts.

The Bell family:-

1 Lewis Bell came from Liverpool to Mainholm as a farm student, married Mary Calvert, the farmers daughter. He (given as Lewis Bell of Todholes) died 1835, aged 42, she in 1878 aged 80 - the headstone is in Dornock.

2 George Bell (married Agnes Thomson, Tullisfield) had a number of children - William (married Elizabeth Beattie, Shillahill), John, Robert and James (all to Australia) and 2 daughters.

3 William, Angus (?), Robert (R T) and Lewis, John and Jimmy (all 3 to Australia). R T, I think, married a Johnston. There may have been another George.

4 R T Bell had Lewis, Dod, Alan (to Australia), Jimmy, John (died in World War 1), Mary, Jean and Annie.

The family fortune is believed to have come from one of those who went to Australia (John ?), and may have been won largely through gambling. R T Bell had the reputation of being a wild, hard drinking man. I think Mr Bell said that R T's sons in consequence were either non-drinkers or took very little - but I'm not sure of this.

The family are related to the Grahams who were in Wysebyhill.

Mr Bell thought that his oldest sister, Mrs Hardy in Riddings farm, would be well worth a visit.

John Bell ^{died in} ~~died~~ Australia, near Geelong - where he gave a lot of land to town and 'Bell Park' is called after him. It has a golf course and a hospital was built on the land. They think this is the John Bell who died in 1901.

To Bell
1821 - 76