

ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with Jack Burnett

7th January 1987

Jack Burnett and his wife live at Broadlands, a bungalow near Robgill Tower. Aged 72, he still works at Nouthill everyday. His wife comes from Penrith, but had been in the area long enough to be able to help with the interview. I had hoped to learn mainly about horse-showing and curling. As it turned out, he didn't say much about curling, but had a good deal to say about the tennis club and the Victory/Victoria Band, as well as farming.

Mrs Burnett, a keen baker, provided a very pleasant supper.

School

Mr Burnett didn't go to Kirkpatrick Fleming school but to Gretna Township (a 2 mile walk), the family having started there when they lived at Whinnyrig (They moved to Cranberry about 1908). The school was upgraded about that time, so that he stayed on there and took his advanced certificate, after which you could, if you wished transfer to further education. His father, who left aged 13, had won the dux medal at Gretna.

He knew some of the Kirkpatrick Fleming teachers - Hogg (quite a nice man), who played tennis, James Rae, and Mr Doull (whom they liked), who had no family. Hogg and Doull both came from Wamphray. Rae's family were about the same age as himself.

He also mentioned that his aunt Vi -Violet - was a cookery teacher (She married Bob Sloan).

Church

The Burnett's used to provide horses to take the children to the Sunday School treat before they started using charabancs. You needed a quiet natured horse for that. He remembered trips to Mossknow and Woodhouse. He also mentioned the Sunday School going to Rockcliffe by train.

He himself went to Sunday School, and later to the Bible Class. I think he said that his sister taught in the Sunday School. His father was an elder in the church, and he thought they had an old photograph of the Session - but his wife said no - with Willie Rogerson of Williamsfield in it.

He talked of the ministers. Walker, 'a great man', Fyffe good, Duncan very clever, left the ministry became a headmaster, they thought, perhaps near or in Dunfermline. Audrey Duncan, his daughter, was very friendly with Jack Burnett's sister, and used to visit her at Nutberry (Jack Burnett's sister married Irving,

who took Nutberry when Jim Mitchell left for Berwickshire about 1945). He was asked by Mr Cartwright to become an elder, but he didn't like Mr Cartwright (one day they turned up at church and found the communion rails had disappeared). They also seemed not very keen on Mr Gregory, but they had a high regard for Dr Horsburgh. McKenzie was quite nice, quiet - christened their boys. But one thing to be said for Mr Cartwright was that he could preach a good sermon when he wanted to. He died very soon after leaving - having gone to Orkney. I gather that some of the congregation tried to get rid of him.

The only other point about the church was his remark that Willie Rogerson was a great churchman.

Sport and  
Entertainment

For showing horses see 'Farming'.

Curling:- His father was a keen curler, went to Crossmyloof and Ayr, won cup(s) at the latter. His team-mates were Jim Mackie (Calvertsholm), Jim Irving (Shawrig) and Bobby Graham (Scales). John Mackie (Redhouse) was another good curler. I got the impression that Jim Mackie was his closest curling associate. But Jack Burnett is not himself a curler.

His father was also a great green bowler at Grætna. At one time there was a bowling green at Kirkpatrick Fleming.

Jack Burnett himself played a lot of tennis and won a few prizes locally. At one time there must have been up to about 40 members - it was the main summer sport. Hannah Wyllie, Davidsons of Hayfield, Hogg (the school master), the Raes of Kirkpatrick, and the Mackies were the players he best remembered. He mentioned that the court had originally been where the new houses are, and then moved - I forgot to ask when - to Toppinghead. There were two courts, and such was the demand that you were lucky to get two games a night. But membership dwindled until there were only eight or so left. I wondered if the departure of Mr Hogg could have hit the club, but he thought it was in decline well before that. A man was paid to maintain the courts.

Another strong tennis player was Jenny Graham, who was an outstanding badminton player. Badminton was available on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in the hall, carpet bowling on Monday, Wednesday, Friday - but in both cases priority booking was given to dances or whist drives (e.g. for the Infirmary). The badminton was like the tennis - you put your name down, got your turn, and would be lucky to get two games in your

evening (say 7.00 to 9.30). You could also play dominoes. The 'big man' in carpet bowling, he thought, was Jim Johnstone. Mr Fyffe - although not a particularly active player - used to go to the club.

Jack Burnett went to whist drives, and used to play nap. He had never played bridge but knew that the Mackies were keen players. He also mentioned Ian and Jean Graham, now in Crabtree, Gretna, as members of one of the local teams (presumably Annan). These are connections of Jenny Graham (above) and Graham the blacksmith.

There was no hare coursing in the parish - but near Annan.

He took part, sometimes successfully, in ploughing matches in Gretna and district.

He also played football, but not in a team.

He played in the Victoria or Victory Dance Band (he wasn't quite sure which was its name, but the first time he called it 'Victoria'). It started probably before the war, and he thought it had evolved from the Drama Group (see below). They played throughout the war, as far as Corrie. (During the war there were petrol restrictions but you got a taxi hire. This may have been made easier for approved concerts in favour of the troops). Jack played the accordion, Margaret Collinge the piano, Gavin Fleming from Crowdieknowe the saxophone, Jock Notman the fiddle and Dave Johnstone the drums.

They seemed to have played as much for pleasure as for money, and often played free to the troops.

Jim Mitchell and Charlie (surname not given) started a sort of drama club. Molly Mackie acted and was a lovely singer. Jim Mitchell and Jim Irving used to sing comic songs. One was something like -

'Some thinks as we are very much alike,  
But we are the opposite'.

Jim Mitchell was very tall, Jim Irving very short, which helped the song.

After World War 1 there was a picture house at Gretna. Sometimes vaudeville acts were put on by touring companies at Victoria Hall.

Mrs Graham of Mossknow was a great sportswoman, marvellous with a gun. But she hated to shoot a fox. There was a story of how they were shooting through the turnips and kale when they raised a fox. She wouldn't

shoot it - she'd hunt it with the hounds, she said, but not shoot it.

Fishing. the Kirtle is quite good for trout, but is not a salmon river, although occasionally Jim Irving (?) got a salmon in his nets which had been trying to swim up river to spawn.

No local point to point, not anyone who kept ponies, and not a hunting area.

#### Farming

They went to Nouthill in 1921, having been previously in Cranberry (which stayed in the hands of his uncle). The previous tenants (I think of Nouthill - but check Valuation Roll, possibly Cranberry) were Twaddles, who didn't know the farm was coming up for sale and had left for a farm near Carlisle. His father at first rented but then bought. He lived for a time in a cottage in 'The Valley', Nouthill.

From the start they went in for horses. They broke so many a year and worked them on the farm so as to get as much as they could out of them before selling them. They would buy them as foals or 2 year olds at Langholm (?), (or Lanark ?), Carlisle, Wigtown. They seldom bred the horses themselves. Generally they would have 5 or 6 Clydesdales, and 2 or 3 foals. They would sell one at Candlemas, and perhaps one each of the next three months, maybe breaking in about 6 a year. There were no regular horse fairs nearby by then, but at the Dumfries Rood Fair a man Johnstone used always to have 15 to 20 horses for sale.

They used to show at the local shows - Lockerbie, Annan, latterly at Dumfries, and all round Cumberland, where every village used to have a show. The stables (now the garage) at Nouthill <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~, or <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~, covered with championship rosettes. They showed me photographs of three prize winning horses. One of their best was to be entered for the Highland Show the last time it was at Ayr, but was bought by Peter Sharp just beforehand and was to go to Canada. (I think Sharp may have been merely the agent; John Kerr of Redhall also comes into the story.) Its new owners got it accepted as a late entry - and it won everything (in harness and yoke).

Horses were entered either as work horses or in harness. The Burnetts, I gathered, were especially successful with the former, but also competed, often enough successfully, in the latter. Then the horses had to be decorated, brasses polished and so on. He would often walk the horse to Carlisle, leaving at