

ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with Mrs. Helen Wiold (m.s. Anderson)

14th February, 1987

Mrs. Wiold, aged 74, has lived virtually all her life at Birkshawhead, and therefore has outstanding knowledge of the Irvington area. Her father took the farm, which was originally on the Cove estate, in the early years of the century. Later, her husband bought the farm probably in 1942. Her sister, Mrs. Johnston, lives in the village, and is a few years older, and some of Mrs. Wiold's information was what her sister had told her. Mrs. Wiold still helps on the farm, looking after the calves. As an informant she was able to give a lot of information, and was particularly valuable because of the care she took to try to be accurate: if she wasn't sure, she said so. Her son was in for part of the time and contributed a lot too. Her daughter teaches Geography at Annan Academy.

Features of the house include 5 cats - who sleep in the fire-side oven, or on your knee, at least 3 dogs - and 2 grandfather clocks.

School

She could just remember Mr. Christie, the temporary headmaster. She remembered him giving a good hiding to a boy Johnston from the Hamper who had tried to play truant but had been chased and caught at Fauldingcleugh Loaning by his mother. Then McKerchar came back, and soon after Mr. Rae.

Her first teacher was Miss Crooks, who had to take two classes in the one room, the older ones on one side, younger at the other. She thought the classrooms had always been flat, not tiered, heated by boiler and pipes. The young pupils had their own small blackboards and chalk. (I had meant to ask about playground facilities, shelters and so on, but forgot to). Miss Crooks always taught the infants.

Her later teachers were Miss Brown, Miss Anderson and Mr. Rae, all of whom - especially Miss Anderson, were fairly strict.

Mrs. Wiold was quite clever, and was more than once a prize-winner, although Elma Rae (teacher's daughter) probably won the Dr. Carruthers medal. She married Henry Roddick, the auctioneer's son and died about two years ago. There were perhaps four girls and four or five boys who went to Lockerbie Academy - most of whom would sit the bursary, although some quite clever children didn't sit it because they'd no desire to go. Among the Lockerbie group were Lily MacDonald, Sam McLellan, Anne Hind and (younger) Margaret Notman. Mr. McDonald was the gamekeeper at Mossknow, and lived in a

funny shaped house, having earlier been at Castlemilk. The McLellans lived about Ecclefechan. Anne Hind, now Mrs. Carruthers, lives in Annan (and has a daughter, Nancy). Mrs. Wield went in the first year of buses to Lockerbie - put on by, she thought, Gideon Bell at Ecclefechan station, although she wasn't sure.

Mr. Rae was a great one for concerts - every year in the Public Hall. Mrs. Wield was no singer but enjoyed acting and took part in the sketches. Misses Brown and Anderson were great for making costumes. She thought Miss Brown lodged at the Manse, Miss Anderson with Georgie Ritchie's, whom she later married.

I asked who were the live wires, but she couldn't pick any one pupil out.

She enjoyed the soup-kitchen. As well as the farmers giving tatties and turnips, Sanderson, the Irvington dealer, gave salt. At playtime she always ran up to see what Mrs. Turnbull was making - broth, tattie or lentil soup, and hoped it was lentil, and that it wasn't broth. You paid your penny and got your ticket which entitled you to one bowl of soup - but you might get second helpings if you were lucky. Sometimes you'd see Mrs. Walker ~~X~~ Mrs. Graham of Mossknow, (or presumably, Mrs. Davidson, the coal merchant's wife) going home with cans of leftover soup. These three helped Mrs. Turnbull to serve.

Lor

The soup kitchen - where Moffat's car pumps are - looked as if it had been an old smiddy. It had stalls in it. You sat on forms and trestle tables, or on a nice day you could sit outside.

Children from the Poor House attended the school. So far as she could remember they were treated just the same as anyone else.

School outings might be to the Holm (at Mossknow), and she remembered one to Woodhouse (Mr. Fleming's) travelling in carts. Another was by private transport to Wetherall, when she was in the car of Mr. Martindale (see Woodhouse). Another time they went by Charabanc (horse drawn, I think) to Moffat. And by the time she left school the trips were by bus.

She left Lockerbie Academy at school leaving age and - after a spell at home - worked in service for a time until she came back to help in the house when her sister married.

Her daughter, Margaret, went to Annan, the first year they went there, Little having put on a mini-bus about

1960.

Church

I asked about services at Irvington, and she said her sister, Chris, had mentioned 'preachings' in a cottage in the village by Jacob Smith, who was a member of Pincod Church.

She went to Kirkpatrick Fleming Sunday School and Church. Quite a lot of them used to walk together - children from Blackyett, Robgill, Irvington and Fairy-raw. At the Sunday School Bessie Graham seemed to have a position of authority. Another teacher was Jim Finlay, a step-son of Mr. Lamont, who in turn was a great churchman. The Sunday School was divided up into classes, one taken by the Minister. Sunday School outings went to Mossknow, Shawrig^g and the like - tea, races and a bag of buns. She didn't go to Bible Class.

Mr. Walker was a good Minister - a plain man who used to go to help threshing and so on, went around in clogs, had a cow and perhaps a stirk, with a man to help him, and, of course, played the fiddle.

Mrs. Wield's first job after leaving school was with Mr. Stafford, who was killed in the Gretna bombing.

Mr. Fyffe she saw as a nice man, homely, easy to talk to in your house, perhaps too much inclined to defer to his sister, lacking judgement himself (an opinion others have also given).

Of all the Ministers she liked Mr. Mackenzie best. He came round by bike until he got a moped. She remembered him saying something like 'Do you think I would have it if somebody hadn't given me it'. Mackenzie was a good preacher and you could say anything to him. She remembered the fuss over selling the glebe but thought the Minister had been in the right that a meeting had been called to which the objectors hadn't gone.

Mrs. Wield said something that others have suggested too, that you couldn't get a Minister who suited them all. If he suited the more upper class/middle class part of the community, he wouldn't suit the common people, and vice versa. Mr. Mackenzie was one whom the common people liked, and perhaps the same might apply to some extent to Mr. Cartwright - at any rate, she liked him. Mr. Wield chipped in with a remark about chestnuts. I think he and other youngsters had probably been gathering chestnuts, illegally, at the Manse when he came across them and invited them into the Manse.

Sport and
Entertainment

Not really discussed.

(She said that the Tennis Court was frequented by the 'would be's' - those with social pretensions).

The Andersons and Wiolds were not card players.

She suggested the Cove/Irvington wood as an obvious place to picnic.

She'd no recollection of the Mosaknow show. /

She said she was never at dances when the British Hondurans were there.

The Social Club, like the tennis court, tended to be a middle class organisation.

Quitting lasted a while in the now London House car park, and there was green bowling up the back road.

She never went to the Guild.

There used to be god dances at Kirkpatrick Fleming, and concerts and socials - for example the annual carpet bowler's prize-giving social.

Economic

There used to be pools in the Kirtle down Calvertsholm way, but a lot have been dredged and straightened out.

Irvington. When she was young there were two shops in Irvington, Currie and Sanderson. Both were general dealers. Currie made their own bread. Tomy Sanderson used go round Springkell and Chapelknowe with pony and trap, delivering groceries and feeding stuffs for hens and pigs. I think she said he dealt in 1/2 cwt. bags - smaller bags than you'd get from big dealers. From the Sandersons are descended Hallidays, the transport people, of Floss:-

Bill Halliday = Mary Jane Sanderson

Tom Bill Jock Alex Millie = Dad White
 son (in Breathill) (builder)

or is Millie the daughter of Tom?

When Bill Halliday married Mary Jane Sanderson, Tommy and his wife went to Bonshawmains. Bill had old

lorries at Irvington, in which he collected the milk locally and the milk went in the lorries to Edinburgh by night. He took their milk until the cans were done away with and tankers came in.

Dod White, who built a bungalow in the wood, set up on his own as a builder quite a long time ago. His father and uncle were builders in Eaglesfield. He died, but his son now runs the business.

Mrs. Currie was a great baker. Her daughters never married, and the son went to Ayrshire.

Another Irvington business man was Joe Ellis, who probably started with Robison of Annan, then started to take a threshing mill round the farms on his own. He came to Birkshawside among others. He died in Irvington, where his widow remarried till she went to an old folks home, where she died a few years since.

Craik of Kirtlebridge used to send a grocery van round and then sold to Semple, who moved from Annan to Kirtlebridge. Next came Corchoran (spelling?) also at first used to call for orders, then started a regular round. Now one van comes, from Carlisle, on Saturday nights. Butcher meat rounds were by Tom Irving (Kirkpatrick Fleming) and Fleming (Annan). The baker's van was Harkness of Longtown for a long time.

There was no Irvington clogger, but there was a shoemaker, Davie Burnie, whom she can't remember very well, at Fairyraw. The Wields bought their clogs from Johnstone in Newton.

Mr. Johnstone in Newton (the same man?) used to go round Irvington and Fairyraw to collect letters which he took to the station for the mail train, which she thought was about 9 o'clock at night. He just lifted, didn't deliver - and did it for years and years. (Does that mean there was no post box? Did he actually come to each house, or blow a whistle, or what?) His two sons still live at Newton.

From Irvington to Cove and Kirkpatrick people might take a short cut through Birkshawside. Her father never ploughed right up to the hedge, so that people could use it. You went down to the wood and across the Cove Quarry railway bridge and thence either to the main road or by the edge of the railway to Cove Crossing - but now the wood is so grown up that it would be a difficult path to take. Nor now are there any primroses. In Spring the wood was a mass of colour - 'craters' (wild hyacinths) and primroses. Not now. The path was kept open while the Forestry had it.

There was no Irvington Smiddy. Nearest were Kirkpatrick Fleming and Christiellands. Most of the people were probably farm labourers. Mr. Johnston, who lived with his mother, was a watchmaker in Annan. Mr. Marshall drove a cart for an Annan brewery. Mrs. Marshall lived there a long time after he died. His son, Dave, went to Gala, his daughter to Lockerbie.

I've a note which I don't quite understand about Mrs. Harkness (Mrs. Marshall's mother), who died in 1922. In the same context is mentioned Mr. Harkness (?Jim), who had a very good garden and may have won prizes at flower shows. There must have been two Harkness families, because someone Haining lived with Jock Harkness.

I asked about travelling folk and the like. She mentioned a fellow who used to come round who made baskets from wands taken from the wood.

So far as she could remember the Irvington road had always been tarred. She remembered the men coming round with the horse drawn water cart, the stray chippings. It was rough, but it was tarred. Irvington was where some (?) of the roadmen lived.

Electricity didn't come till the 1950's.

Other economic data.

When she was young there were few cars locally. Nutberry and Broats, she remembered, and Jim Martindale, who had an open kind with a hood. Jim Graham (Broadlea) had a motor-bike and side car. And 'Mad McConnell', of Blackyetts had a motorbike.

At Beltenmont Mill Mr. Fraser would invite friends, to take his home made brew which was so potent that you were lucky after it to reach the top of the kirk hill before collapsing. He made walking sticks with funny handles - rather like horns, and ornamental dishes. Big, bearded, they were a great church going family - to which he wore a tail coat. His wife was small and kindly. They had a daughter. The Wields got their porridge oatmeal from the mill.

She said a little about the Poor House. Two men used to come round with a barrow, selling kindling wood. She reckoned Mr. Kerr would be good to the inmates. Tramps could get a line for a night's lodgings from Harry Bryson.

Owners of the wood - Ritchie of Cove sold to Tommy Irving, he to Forestry, they, last year, to David White the builder, who also has the quarry. There's no vehicular road into the quarry now.

W She couldn't remember the quarry working. She thought she had, but her sister said that would be later, when the railway was lifted, about 2/3 years after. A man lived in a wee house in the quarry and drove the pug. I think this gould be Mr. Miller, who, her sister said, went to Glasgow.

Hondurans: she confirmed that some children were sent to Newcastle - at least two, by different mothers. They were not babies when they went. One lived in Irvington, and her sister's (?) boy, Johnny White, about the same age, asked if it was all right for him to play with Ted. (N.B. Names of parents omitted).

[~~scribbles~~]
Farming When her father had the farm it was mixed. Her husband bought the farm in 1942. He'd been at Eastriggs, where he had a dairy, so he set up a dairy at Birkshawside, moving it from Butterdales in 1943 or 1944 (He married Mrs. Wiold in 1946). Mrs. Wiold thinks that when she was young none of the farms about Irvington were dairies - only farms in the Riggheads area. From Birkshawside the milk went to Lockerbie Creamery in big 12 or 15 gallon cans, until they went over to 10 gallon ones.

At first it was Ayrshires. Mr. Wiold can just remember when his father got his first Fresian bull at Castle Douglas. At its peak they had 99 cattle - never quite 100, and now they have 75 to 85. Oddly enough their first Foot and Mouth Epidemic proved a blessing, for you couldn't sell them, so they had to keep their cows and so they had to keep more and the herd built up. For the last 14 years they've grown nothing, except for silage. They never made their own cheese, but her mother used to make her own butter - and when I was offered tea and scones, it was home produced milk. Mr. Wiold mentioned that Jim Johnstone started silage only 4 years ago because one year he's a bad go with hay (The drought). Jim still does some hay and turnips.

The house has no date stone, but is not thought to be the original building, which is said to be at the 'wood back' - where you plough up a terrible lot of stones. There was a round building, which Mr. Wiold just remembers, which they called the mill shed - presumably

a horse mill. The barn and stables - unchanged since she remembers - are very old. It was doubtful if the farm had any historic features, unless the knowe had a significance which they didn't know about. It had a great big hole in it recently, assumed to be the work of a badger.

Nearby, on the Broats estate, had been North Angle, a house on the corner of the road, knocked down a few years back (Mr. Wield can't remember it), where wood was cut down for the airfield).

Her father put new drains in the Top Field - some running one way, some the other. North Angle had probably been re-drained. Her father had worked a farm around Chapelknowe, and his father was at Allalea (?) near Creca, and lived at (?) North Angle for a year. He came to Birkshawside about 1912 - when, Chris said, she was 8 or 9. Mrs. Wield missed the neighbourliness of the old days when they and the other three farms - Broats, Broathill and Flosch, always helped each other out, at harvest time, for example. At Broats were the Bells, Bob Lamont at Broathill, Little of Flosch. She never knew Robert Bell but she knew of his reputation as a drinker, and the story of him inviting people for shooting and then getting up a tree and shooting at the guests.

Some Little descendants live at the Rigg, but Maggie Little (Davidson?) is probably the only one left. Margaret Little in Lockerbie Bank is, I think, Wat's lassie.

They used to have 300 or 400 chickens of different kinds, until the cost of feeding became too great. They still have some hens. They hated to kill and eat their own hens.

Talking of vets she agreed when I said that I'd been told that Abel Mitchell was often regarded as a good substitute.

Most local farmers have a 'Skyview' photograph, but they have too. The first was taken before the new ^{low} sheds were erected. Jim (her husband) wouldn't pay it because it showed the collapsed dairy sheds, but after all, that's what the farm was like, so they got it the year after he died. Then they got the modern, coloured one, when a new lot were taken.

Birkshawside never had a big workforce - father, mother and boy and help at haytime and so on.

When Mrs. Wield was born there was no running water.

The house water came from a well some distance away in the field corner, although there was another at the end of the house, which is now filled up with stones from the field. The other well is still there. In these days there were cobble stones at the door, a cement floor, and paraffin lighting.

She thought her sister, who is about 8 years older, would be able to say more, but Mrs. Johnston was unwilling to be interviewed.

Other farms
& farmers

She had a high regard for Jim Johnstone. Sheep, she said, are his life. He took on looking after some for somebody, and would go out at midnight to cut turnips for them, although he wouldn't get a penny extra. A good farmer in every way, from whom they buy silage when theirs is finished, and seed corn (for silage) - and absolutely straight to deal with.

Miscellaneous

Mrs. Wield used the phrase 'if you believe it' about Bruce's cave. Some others have shared doubts, but the majority say they had always understood the story to be true. Apparently the story was told that Mr. Rae, a stone mason at Moorend, Lizzie Rae's grandfather, held the candle for his fellow mason who put up the lettering. This would be before Mrs. Wield was old enough to have visited the cave. There was a platform there years ago.

The war time airfield was for small aircraft only, and for training. The men came from Carlisle, by bus except for a few ground staff who lived in huts. Once a big aircraft ran out of fuel and landed there, where it sat for about two days. A lot of people came on the Sunday to see it go away. Long before that there was a man - she thought the name was Sir Alan Cobham or Cobbam, a friend of Mr. Ritchie, who used to come regularly and give locals air trips for a fee. There was a story about one who wanted to jump out.

Mrs. Graham of Mossknow, an awfully nice lady, used to give out boxes for Dr. Barnardos which you would encourage visitors to put a penny or two into. Then she would lay on a tea, and games for 'Opening Night', to which everyone with a box was invited.

To complete her own life story. After leaving Lockerbie she was at home, then with Stafford, then worked in Cumberland till her sister married, so she came back to look after the house

Glendinnings of Broathill: she and Grace Glendinning went to school together. They left the district for Whitespottes, near Closeburn.

The religious John Lamont was at Newton.

There was a good comment about Tom Beattie - 'Tom wid fa' oot wi' an empty hoose'. He was - as everyone says - domineering. Of his father, old Tom, who was pretty deaf, a good story, when - presumably not realising that everyone could hear him, he remarked of his brothers - 'There they go, feed their guts and starve their servants'. Tom had been put out of Torduff about the start of World War 1. His son, as councillor got the back road tarred, ditches filled in at the roadside, electricity supplied and street lights - making sure there was one on his own building.

(Mrs Wield was quite eloquent on the social divisions of the parish. The ~~people~~ ~~in their own esteem~~ ~~The~~ ~~people~~ a bit the same - tho' not Mr ~~people~~ -, nice enough when you meet them, but socially a bit superior. The ~~people~~ seemed to be in the same category. ~~and~~ ~~and~~ were fine, but ~~kinda~~ kinda' upper.)

Omit - but
can we keep such
social comment in
our private copy?

People

Mrs Wiold - passim
Mr Anderson (her father) : 1
Mrs Johnston (her sister) : 1, 3, 9
Margaret Wiold : 1, 2
Mr Christie : 1
Johnston (truant) : 1
Mr McKerchar : 1
Mr Rae : 1, 2
Miss Crooks : 1
Miss Brown : 1, 2
Miss Anderson : 1, 2
Elma Rae : 1
Henry Roddick : 1
Lily McDonald : 1
Sam McLellan : 1
Anne Hind : 1
Margaret Notman : 1
Mr McDonald (G/keeper) : 1-2
Nancy Carruthers : 2
Gideon Bell : 2
Geordie Ritchie : 2
Mr T Sanderson & fam. : 2, 4
Mrs Turnbull : 2
Mrs Walker : 2
Mrs Graham (Mossknow) : 2, 9
Mrs Davidson (coal) : 2
Moffat : 2
Mr Fleming : 2
Mr Martindale : 2, 6
Little of Annan : 2-3
Jacob Smith : 3
Bessie Graham : 3
Jim Finlay : 3
Mr Lamont (N/t) : 3, 10
Mr Walker : 3
Mr Stafford : 3, 9
Mr Fyffe : 3
Miss Fyffe : 3
Rev McKenzie : 3
Rev Cartwright : 3
Mr Wiold : 3, 7, 8
Mr Grimson
Mrs Duncan
Mr Gregory
Currie family : 4, 5
Hallidays of Floss : 4
Dod White : 4, 5
Joe Jim Ellis : 5
Robison of Annan : 5
Craik of Kirtle : 5
Corchoran : 5

Tom Irving : 5
 Fleming (Annan) : 5
 Harkness (Longtown) : 5
 Davie Burnie : 5
 J Johnstone, clogger : 5
 Mr Johnstone (watchmaker) : 6
 Mr Marshall & family : 6
 Jock Harkness : 6
 Jim Harkness : 6
 - Haining : 6
 Jim Graham : 6
 Mad McConnel : 6
 Frasers : 6
 William Kerr : 6
 Harry Bryson : 6
 Ritchie of Cove : 7, 9
 Tommy Irving : 7
 David White : 7
 Johnny White : 7
 Jim Wield : 7, 8
 Bob Lamont (Broathill) : 8
 Bells of Broats : 8
 Littles of Floss : 8
 Abe Mitchell : 8
 Jim Johnstone : 7, 9, 10
 Mr Rae : 9
 Lizzie Rae : 9
 Sir Alan Cobham ? : 9
 Glendinnings : 10
 Tom Beattie (younger) : 10
 Tom Beattie (elder) : 10
 Dr Caruthers : 1
 Mollats : 2
 Mr Miller (quarry) : 7
 Irvings of Shawrigg : 10
 Mackies : 10
 Burnetts : 10
 Mitchells : 10