

ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with Mrs Jenny Kirkland  
(nee Donaldson)

24th November 1986

A follow up interview. Previously Mrs Kirkland had told me about Donaldson's dairy business. I think she was born about 1903 and lived at Sarkshields until about 1927, excluding her time at Atholl Crescent. Then her father moved to Torrorie.

Her present house - 'The Knowe' has a fine view - it overlooks Kirkbean Village and on a good day affords a view as far as Powfoot.

She was careful in what she said. There was not going to be any scandal revealed.

Sport and Entertainment      Mrs Kirkland was the wrong person to get such information from, although bits came up incidentally, especially under Church. She was very proud of the way Eaglesfield had managed to raise money for its own tennis courts (which, I gather, she played). 'Old Henderson' (see Church) was very keen, and - I think - Johnny Rae was active (but he was active in many things).

The Eaglesfield Flower Show was a truly great occasion, the first Saturday in September. She recalled people coming from miles around - especially Cumberland - for the Cumberland wrestling. She remembered one year when it was so hot on the show day that they couldn't harness the horse, the metal would burn it.

She knew Donaldson the draughts player, but he was no relation. I think she called him James Donaldson. She thought he was an ex-schoolteacher who came from Breconbeds, settled in Eaglesfield and set up a cycle shop, where he employed girls who made fish flies. Miss Donaldson (a sister?) was a milliner.

At Sarkshields - as in other farms - they had two hunting gates - one through the wood to Burnfoothill.

She mentioned whist, dances - but there was neither Guild nor W.R.I.

School      Mrs Kirkland went to Gair, which she left in 1911 or 1912 to go for a year to Eaglesfield, and then had some years at Dumfries Academy.

At Gair there were 2 teachers. First there was Miss Johnston - you were all right if you were in her room. By implication you were not all right in Mr Turnbull's room. Then Miss Wyllie came. She lived with her

mother and sister. she and her sister went to Gretna on retiral - lived in a house at junction of Dumfries and Glasgow roads. She thought highly of Miss Wyllie. Mrs Kirkland from the age of about 9 cycled to Eaglesfield. Her brothers went straight from Gair to Dumfries Academy.

She showed a school photo, about 1911-12, when her brother had joined infants class. The teacher (quite good looking, young), Miss Scott was in that photo for Gair and the next year for Eaglesfield, for she left the one for the other. Eaglesfield was perhaps a 4 teacher school. Miss Scott lodged at Old Gair. Also in the photo were Armstrong girls - a family which had returned from the Falklands to High Stenries. also there were a girl Davidson, from Gair, the under gamekeepers son (Duncan Irving was either the boy or his father), Jean Loudon, daughter of the head keeper. The Loudens lived at Cairnhill.

The school did not have much in the way of outings/sports. The only outing she remembered was for George V's coronation, when they were all taken down in decorated carts to Mossknow.

#### Church

There was no Guild at Pincod.

The Springkell people went to Kirtle Church.

The ministers at Pincod were Mr Donaldson and Mr Fulton (till the union or till they left). She thought Fulton came from Corsock and that one of them - probably Donaldson - went to Rigg. I think it was he whose wife was connected with Bewglass (my spelling), the Governor of Barlinnie.

year

Every year at Pincod they had a soiree, and sometimes magic lantern shows. The big thing in her week was the choir practice on Tuesday night. It was a great choir, over 20 of them. The choir was run by Mr Henderson, the organist and an Eaglesfield grocer.

The beadle was Davie Davidson, the roadman from the Langshaw area. Quite a lot came from Eaglesfield, for there was no church in the village - the choice was Pincod, Kirtle, Waterbeck or Middlebie. She remarked that Kirtle was a quoad sacra parish.

Donaldson was very nice, quietish. Fulton much the same (I felt she had a less clear impression of Fulton).

Farms,  
Farming and  
Farmers

She mentioned Johnston who walked to Pincod from Southwoodhead.

Braehead marched with them - Abel (?) Beattie, then Irving.

Howgillside - Lamont.

Her mother (?) was from Logan Mains. The Logan burn starts in/near Sarkshields. she recalled seeing peat being cut at Logan Mains, (perhaps from Flowdens Moss).

Sarkshields separated from (?) Wysebyhill by a small strip of Burnfoothill, where they had a hunting gate to ('through the wood'). There were originally 3 and then 2 farm cottages at Sarkshields. People used to walk through the fields to Craig's (?) shop at Kirtlebridge for shopping - coming out at Langshaw Burnfoot. (That was, she guessed, the only shop in Kirtlebridge).

Sarkshields farm had a water supply - a tank in a field. The water was, she thought, fine. But the cottages used a well.

She thinks they just had a kitchen tap until water was put in. There was no electricity - but also a tap in the dairy.

She isn't sure whether it was her father or the Mackies who started the dairy. The milk went to Kirtlebridge station, got 10.15 train to Newcastle. Her father went there about 1900. It became a big business, the biggest in the area. They started delivering on request, to the United Free Manse, and it developed from there. People put out their cans - some perhaps had 2 cans, which all had to be washed and scalded by the Donaldsons - everything sterilised (and nothing pasteurised). They started with a spring cart, then about the time her sister left school they began to use large milk cans with taps. This led to a huge increase in demand. Eventually their round went via Eaglesfield and Kirtlebridge.

Her sister lives in the Meadows, Edinburgh - unmarried - kept hotels, guest houses and at one time kept house for her brother. She, I think, trained as an industrial chemist.

She showed me a photo of her father and the workers, each holding a bucket. I think it had the large milk cans in it. He seemed a thick set man, round faced, slightly bald at the front. The workforce was his (?) sister, a boy and 3 others.

field? Sarkshields was very wet. She mentioned alterations to the course of the burns - one came past the steading, across the road, to a cottage ('across/cross f 2'). Another, ~~made by Mackies (?) to change course~~, comes out as Logan Water. (Not clear - but I think the 2 burns may have been joined to make one, and 'Mackie' may have intended as 'march' i.e. boundary, but I've put a capital M).

Omit been She also showed photos of the farm house. It was not, she thought, a particularly old house, nor were there old outbuildings. Her father was for ever adding sheds. She also showed me a photograph of 2 joined calves - joined about the hip, born dead after a great struggle by Milligan the vet. There was a byre which held 58 cattle, and a back byre for 10, with a calf house at each end. Then he built a byre for 40. Mainly Ayrshires, the occasional Shorthorn bull, and some bullocks.

They had their own threshing mill for their own use. They grew corn and a green crop, turnips for the cows and some potatoes.

Lime, for whitewashing, came from Cauldronlea.

Nothing historical on the farm. There was a mound in one field, away above the pond, across the road from the steading.

There was also a hunting gate to Howgillside - but she had no recollection of ever seeing the hunt.

They made cheese only when the railway was on strike (the second person to say that - but she didn't relate it to a particular strike. I can think of only 3 strikes sufficiently prolonged, but must check for others).

Mr Donaldson came from Carnwath, where his father was a grocer. She showed a family photo - Alex (looked youngest) became a manager in the Albion Motor Works, Jim became a doctor, John a ? grocer, and another a chemist, I think. Her father went to Agricultural College, having enjoyed working on a farm outside Carnwath. He never would buy a farm until he bought Overton, as second highest bidder, the highest having to withdraw/abandon it. About this time he wanted to set up on his son, Peter and was worried that he couldn't afford to put Peter in Sarkshields and buy Overton, so his wife told him to be happy and sell Overton, which he did. Soon after Torrorie came up. When he went to see the Laird of Cavens, the Laird said, 'so your the man who can't make up his mind' -

but they got on fine, and he rented the farm.

Mrs Donaldson was a great gardener.

Lockharts - knew well.

Branteth. As you go north most farms were sheep farms, but Branteth had a dairy. Latterly Miller was there, earlier Gibson, who went to Kirkpatrick Durham, no relation of the other Gibsons. Mrs Mackie, Sarkshields, was a Gibson. A daughter is in Greengate ..., Waterbeck (married name ?? Marshall, Maskill).

Mackie, Sarkshields - 7 sons, 2 daughters, cousins of Hillhead. John (Sarkshields), Charles (Redhouse), Andrew (Aitchison Bank), Jim (Waterbeck). John then went to Dalfibble.

#### Economic

Farms - see above.

Eaglesfield had about every trade except a plumber. Smith - clogger, shoemaker, joiner, sculptor (Rae). Orlando Rae opened up in Annan - in Lady Street, past Robison's mills, may still be there. The father was Jimmy Rae. Jimmy Green, the tailor. Urquhart was a big draper, who dealt with Africa - but she didn't think of the Urquharts as so much involved in village affairs. The shop was managed by Jardine. They had a traveller, Wilson, from Ecclefechan.

Lime was got from Cauldronlea.

See earlier about Sarkshields having own mill.

#### Gentry

Her father liked the Johnson-Fergusons. When he left, and they were collecting for his presentation, Johnson-Ferguson said he hoped he'd have a Donaldson in Sarkshields as long as he lived. They liked lady Johnson-Ferguson too - really gracious, a real lady. I got the feeling that the next Lady Johnson-Ferguson wasn't so highly regarded.

She mentioned (above) the gamekeepers. The Loudens family were very clever - 7 of them. Dave became a gamekeeper, Donald was helped into business by Johnson-Ferguson, who was very good that way, and had ties with Manchester. Bill to the police (he left Dumfries Academy to join the army in World War 1, but was sent back as too young, so he got the nickname 'General Loudens'). John went into gardening (Largs), Cath to nursing, Jean and Charlie teachers.

They also knew Peter McGregor, the factor well. Nanna McGregor, became a doctor, went to Taunton, Cissie - older - not strong, stayed at home. Peter went to Seychelles.

Miscellaneous Mrs Kirkland is very keen on embroidery. She had, among others, an embroidered picture of Wreaths tower, and at present is working on the Knowe. She also is a keen cook, and was preparing a special beetroot pickle (in lemon and something else).

She also loves maps. She described the different routes one could take, mentioning Kennedy's Corner - where the road turned right for High Stenries.

Mr Boyle - a real Eaglesfield man, and his father before (possibly in connection with the school?). Brother at Catherinefield, Dumfries - had been at Durisdeer. Was at Dumfries Academy.

Doctor Carruthers had a coachman. The story of his having a cure rang a bell but she wasn't sure. A great man, so far advanced for his years. When she was a girl she got kicked in the face by a horse (which didn't like it when she threw a stone at it) one Sunday night when she was out walking - about Burnside. She was carried home, the milkman cycled to Doctor Carruthers, who came in his pony and trap and stitched her. Her uncle, who was a doctor, later remarked on what a good job Dr Carruthers had made. The mark is just visible and no more now. You see it if you know where to look.

Doctor Carlyle then took the practice.

Her father was chairman of the Parish Council for a number of years. Leslie was secretary and used to cycle up to see Mr Donaldson on parish business. Mr Donaldson normally travelled by pony and trap - didn't get car till after World War 1.