

ANN HILL BEQUEST

Interview with Mrs. Pringle, Wyseby Hill

21st September, 1986

Arranged by Mrs. Darke, taken by Mrs. Pringle (nee Graham) and Doad Taylor. Mrs. Pringle was born there in 1921 and lived till her mid 20's there. Doad Taylor was a farm worker there for about 27 years, probably till the late 1950's, and his father had worked there before him. Dod now suffers from Parkinson's disease. His answers were as monosyllabic as possible.

Mrs. Pringle thinks her grandfather bought the farm in the 1880's, the previous owner or occupier being 'the major' - surname now known. The major had a toilet at the top of the building, but because the water pressure was so low they couldn't pump it up, so the servant had to carry bucketfuls of water up to allow the toilet to be flushed.

After her grandfather came her father, Tom Graham, who died (retired about 1954). Next her brother, who couldn't make a go of it and sold it to Jimmy Duff. Then Feplow for some 18 years, and now Mr. King, from Coleraine via Dalscone, for the last 4 years.

It was then (i.e. 1920's - 1950), as now, a mixed farm, with - she thinks - a 7 year rotation, including oats but never barley. They had 'a cow and a half' - a milking cow and one weight calf, 4 Clydesdale horses, sheep, and a lot of beef cattle. Her father brought in Highland cattle, which were cross bred (with what?) and were hardy enough to pasture on the moss. This was an innovation for the period.

The moss (actually, I think, two separate mosses) produced peat. The workmen used to use their holidays for cutting peats - they never went away anywhere. The house burnt mainly peat and wood.

They also kept a couple of ferrets, and the farm was well stocked with pheasants and grouse. Mr. King - who joined us - said there are no longer many grouse. There is still the odd fox, as there was then.

Mrs. Graham kept thousands of hens (one used to lay an egg, which the dog ate, every day in the dog kennel). A lot of the farmers kept hens - but probably they more than most. One day, when she'd made a surplus, she bought silver teaspoons in Carlisle - much to Mr. Graham's annoyance. The poultry gave her her spending money.

The boys - her elder brothers - used to walk across the fields three miles to Gair School, but she wasn't allowed to go there - nor to the next nearest School, which meant crossing the busy A74. Instead she was boarded in Annan from the age of 5 - with a woman whom she didn't get on with. Later she went to Lockerbie Academy. In these days

there was a railway from Annan to Kirtlebridge, closed long before Beeching.

The neighbouring farm of Flow End (?) was in their day incorporated into Wyseby Hill, but before that it was owned by the Waughs, who were friendly with the Grahams. When they wanted to have a party together, each used to hoist a flag so that the other would know. Mr. Graham also made a track, or rough road, for easy visiting - I think the same road which exists today. There was then, but not now, access to Flow End from the main road.

Mr. Graham was a talented joiner. They were the first in the locality to have electricity, generated from a windmill which he built on the hill, at the front of the house. Mains electricity came about 1934.

He also - along with Mr. Calvert, the blacksmith built a ~~z~~pike-throwing machine, which he'd seen at an agricultural show. Before World War 1 he laid out one of the fields in front of the house as a six-hole golf course. Danny McGregor and others used to come for golf parties. The golf course seems to have been abandoned by the 1920's, but Tom Graham later built a tennis court for his daughter (who disclaims any great prowess but played for Eaglesfield). He also built a hut and a henhouse which was converted into his 'office' at lambing time.

We reckon the original farm house is now one of the farm buildings - to which in the 1920's the stables were attached.

Two walnut trees have been removed - just in front of the house.

A feature of the approach is the narrow road going between tall hedges on either side. Rumour has it that they were supposed to prevent drifting of snow. The road has been metalled but used not to be, - too expensive for the two farms - and was an awful mess because of the water which ran down the hill (the road is very long and straight, about a mile from main road to farm).

There were two (?) great storage tanks beside the house, intended as a reserve supply in time of drought, but never used in Mrs. Pringle's time. There was also a well, covered with a wooden hatch, which used to give her fright - deep and dangerous looking.

There was a pond in the moss - where, incidentally, a number of trees have grown since her time. Recently someone tried to drain the moss. They left a JCB type vehicle overnight, and found it sunk into the moss next morning. It still is there. But a part of the moss has been drained.

Old Doad remarked to me that the place was never the same after Tom left. Doad later worked on the roads.

We discussed field names - which Mr. King didn't have names for at all.

Very roughly.

	Moss Meadow		11 acre	
Cottage	Pond	24 acre	Rough (34 acre biggest)	World's End
			3 Nookit (i.e. 3 cornered)	?Cairt Horse
? Lambing	? Woodhouse/ Woodhouse Mill			

Mr. Rae the builder built a shed in 1931 - year she was born - and kept reminding her of that. Also plantation same year.

I've a note 'pond at cottages'.

Danny McGregor died recently aged 99. He was Tom Graham's best man, and his son was a doctor at Seychelles. He got the job in Dumfries through John Hill - and was succeeded as factor by Mr. Turnbull (who also went to County Buildings). Mr. Taylor (had been under-factor at Balmoral and could probably have been factor had he stayed, whereas Springkell was rather a dead end job. She thought J.R. Hill had simply moved to better himself. Either she or Miss Darke thought they recalled the Greens saying that Mr. Hill did their book-keeping for them. I wondered if that could have been Ann's job. We passed the McGregor house at Sunnybrae - now actually within the Eaglesfield 30 mile limit. Burnfoot of Springkell cannot be more than half a mile from the village.

Mrs. Graham used to golf at Powfoot. She lived in Annan before marriage and cycled there. Dod Taylor = son of Geordie Taylor. His mother died in '1919' flu epidemic.