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MEMOIRS OF LILIAN BIRKHEAD



1896-1987

THURGOLAND FEAST

One recollection of my childhood and teenage days was Thurgoland Feast, always on August Bank Holiday in those days the first weekend in August. On the Friday night lights would appear on the opposite hillside in Thurgoland. These showed up prominently because there were no street lamps. Then on the Saturday night came the sound of Feast music. The attractions had all been installed: the roundabout with horses and cockerels, the stalls, shooting gallery, swings and roundabouts for the younger children. We would always bring home some brandy snap and perhaps a coconut, won by "shying". The caravans on the outskirts of the field, which housed Feast folk, were always a source of curiosity. Did anyone ever think that these would one day be used as holiday homes?

On Sunday all was silent, and then on Monday the Feast field was full of activity and music again.

CHANGES IN THE VILLAGE

These began chiefly after water was piped up to the top of the village, although the coming of electricity in 1935-6 made quite a difference to our lives. There was no thought of central heating even then. That came as the younger generation grew up.

The forerunners of modern housing development in the village were the six council houses, named Castle View, built in 1951. These were meant to be used by agricultural workers, although in the final event only one of the new tenants was directly employed in agriculture. A new sewage system was installed to cater for these.

After this, Jim and Emily Birch built Corandirk, a bungalow on Chapel Lane the first above the chapel. Then in the early sixties another four bungalows were built, The Ramblas, Coldra, Maycott and Braddan.

Bathrooms were added to the existing houses and indoor loos (instead of trekking up the garden on cold winter nights!)

By the 1940s Green Moor was becoming the residence of old people, almost a dying village. But with the coming of water and electricity, and as the older residents died off, younger people began to come in and modernise the old fashioned, but well built stone houses. Chapel Lane, a rugged, uncared for road with deep ruts, was granted road building materials and became a well paved thoroughfare, suitable for the modern motor traffic. For by now every family with access to Chapel Lane has a car some have two!

How well I remember going up and down this rugged lane to school. It could be quite dangerous in the dark, with "toppers" sometimes tumbling from broken down walls. How different was this well kept road with trim bungalows on either side, all with garages or carports and well tended gardens!

The roads along the tops had had little attention. Many years ago, in the early 1800s, two lines of paving stones had been laid for the horse drawn carts carrying stone from the Isle o'Skye quarry. These stones had worn hollow with the years, and the hollows filled with water whenever it rained, making it very difficult to negotiate in the dark. We lived in New Houses then and often had to go that way. Shoe cleaning was essential, although "Is it any good?" we youngsters would protest. We often took a lantern to chapel on Sunday evenings. There were no flashlights then.

As New Houses became more modernised one resident was able to get some waste material from Fox's to lay along the road, which when set made quite a good surface, covering the rough stones.

But I think the coming of water to the village was the greatest boon. No more carrying of buckets of water for the home, for chapel teas, for the school. The school was the last place to be supplied.

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THE DIARY OF WILLIS BURGIN

Son of a Yorkshire miner

After our near miss at the barn we found it much safer to try to sleep in the trench close to the gun position. Some days later the officer ordered me to take three sections, with soldiers and guns, as near the town as possible.



We crawled to the place he indicated, a large shell hole. So quietly did we put ourselves there that the occupying corporal and his men jumped with surprise when I said "Hullo, corporal!", and when he saw the machine gun he was even more surprised. In a hushed voice he told me that they were an advanced listening post, watching the enemy movements in Le Cataour. We got back just as quietly and the officer admitted the move had been a big mistake and we were lucky to get away with it.

Next morning good news came to the 16th Section on the front line. Baths would be provided at the Company HQ in Reament. I marched the first party of men from the Section to the town and into the bath house, which was a barn,

The baths were 8 half-sections of barrel, large enough for a man to sit in 24 inches of hot water. Wood fires were used to heat the water in the cook house "diggers". The soap was French and made no lather it was like using a piece of rubbing stone. After three men had used the water, it was changed. Each received a new shirt, underclothing and a pair of socks. All the newly bathed soldiers got back to the Section with smiling faces.

I took my turn in the next group to have a bath, and like the others was delighted with the new clothes. But when I got back to the gun position I was surprised to find the others sitting on the grass, looking for lice in their new shirts and underwear. "Surely," I said, "You haven't started all ready?" "Sergeant," one replied, "I will lay even money that if you take off your new shirt you will find some ***** itchers!" All the soldiers in the line had lice inside their trouser seams, and for a while it was common to come across one of them with his trousers on his knees, looking for lice and cracking the little blighters with his finger nails.

I wore a blue jersey, and whenever the weather was fine I spread it over a small bush in the hedgerow, allowing spiders to make a meal of those "itchers". I now understand why Napoleon always had his hand well up inside his waistcoat!

FROM WALDERSHELF TO STOCKSBRIDGE

By Brenda Duffield

A difficulty in using the later edition of the 1906 OS map is that it obviously shows more recent building developments. Waldershaigh at Bolsterstone was being built for the occupation of Charles Macro Wilson, but in 1881 he was still in residence at Moor Hall. Allen Croft was not yet being used as a smallpox hospital. Names that do appear in the Census are not all marked on the map, like Common Piece.

A comparison of the two maps shows the greatest similarity is in the location of farms. The same homesteads can be found and an attempt made to trace their fortunes. A comparison of the 1851 and 1881 Census Returns revealed such discrepancies in ownership and acreage that I have had to refer to interim records and also to the 1841 Census in some cases.

Some smallholdings were not farmed throughout the period: Allen Croft, Common Piece and Whitwell only in 1861, Vaughton's at Deepcar only in 1851 and Henholmes not after 1861, while Half Hall did not become a farm until 1861 and Haywoods not before 1881. The remainder were farmed throughout the 30 period.

The apparent size of these properties varied considerably, as shown by these examples of acreage:

	1851	1861	1871	1881
Greave House	50	67	64	65
Spink Hall	150	150	57	10
New Hall	250	108	109	80

These were of course only small parcels of land and we have no way of knowing how accurate the information given to Enumerators had to be, but confirmation of the first change of acreage at Greave House can be found in a Valuation of Copy Tenant-right made out in 1858 from John Helliwell to George Milnes, naming fields comprising 18 acres. The same fields are among those named in the Valuation of Tenant-right, livestock, etc., made on the death of George Milnes in 1862.

The changes made were perhaps of boundary rather than ownership; a farmer taking in land where it suited his purpose or letting it go when it profited him. A change would be made when a tenant died and his family were unable to maintain the holding.

Greenhead Farm at Bolsterstone, big enough in 1851 to support a large family and employ 6 labourers, was reduced to 6.5 acres when occupied only by his widow and remained the same size until inherited by their son, who was farming it in 1881. Spink Hall was a 150 acre farm while John Grayson was alive, but his widow sold off all but 10 acres.

Very few properties actually changed hands or went out of a particular family during this whole period. New Hall, the largest, was farmed by Amos Ridal in 1851, but having built Stocksbridge Hall, he moved there, splitting the farm and leaving only 68 acres for William Lowood (John Grayson's nephew). In 1871 John Revitt was farming 75 acres and Charles Broadhead 34 acres, both under the name New Hall. Finally John Revitt's son-in-law James Charlesworth was farming 80 acres there.

The Charlesworths were at every other ten year interval at Hagg Farm (Later rename Waldershaigh Farm). Throughout the period Couldwells were at the Royal Oak, Deepcar, Crawshaws were at Langley Brook, Creswicks were at Windhill, Hattersleys were always at Holly Bush and also at Half Hall from 1861. Helliwells were at Yewden, the Milnes family at Greave House and the Wainwrights at Low Flatt. Bockings farmed at Watson House and Bate Green, and Newtons owned, without always occupying, Hoyle House, while residing at Yew Trees. The P.J. Hudson, head of household at Yew Trees in 1871 and 1881 was a son-in-law.

Henry Hodgkinson of Spink Hall, schoolmaster and physician, who had married a daughter of Ralph Ellis, is quoted as having declared that he had lived to see every freehold in Waldershef, except Rydd (the Royd) change hands, but this must only have applied in the early days after the release of the freeholds from the grip of the feudal system in 1802. *0 years later the picture is one of fairly stable land ownership, with perhaps only the threat of urbanisation encroaching.

CHAIRMAN'S ODYSSEY

Well done they said, what an achievement, did you enjoy it? Ah! There's a question. Was it the toughest thing you have done in your life? Yes. Was the pain in your knees bringing tears to your eyes? Yes. Did the weather in the Lake District spoil it for you? Yes. These were the questions David and I were asking ourselves from the first day.

But the positives: the camaraderie of the C 2 C walkers, the national and international mixture from York to New York, from Bradford to Brisbane, absolutely fantastic. The Lake District, when we could see it with its' dramatic crags and impressive valleys. Swaledale in the Yorkshire Dales and Farndale, Fryupdale and Eskdale in North Yorkshire. Finally, the first sight of the North Sea, and going down into Robin Hood's Bay. Wow!

My walking companion, with his broad Barnsley accent and dry sense of humour was an instant hit with the C2C ers. I have to admit that it was David's grit and determination that kept me going at some of the lowest points. 200miles in 13 days cannot be factored simply as 15miles a day, not on this walk, which is so physically and mentally challenging. I had not taken into account how big an effect the weather would have on us, what with the tail end of hurricanes Irene and Katia and the continuous driving rain, it certainly took its' toll. We were absolutely exhausted most evenings not least from having to watch where we placed every step, because a wrong move could have meant a twisted ankle or worse.

Our best day of the walk was possibly the second day, beautiful and sunny for the walk up the Ennerdale valley, over the ridge and down to Rosthwaite in Borrowdale, some 15 miles. The views round Ennerdale were breathtaking and the walk, although tough up to the 2000 ft ridge, was rewarded with fine views from the summit. There was a warning of what was to come with parts of the track with running water, like walking in streams.

The worst day for me was the section from Kirkby Stephen to Muker Low Row, supposedly 19 miles. Weather started off poor with drizzle and got progressively worse as we climbed an atrocious hill out of the town towards the Nine Standards Rig. The weather closed in with driving rain 50 metre visibility and bogs. We had to resort to compass bearings and map work to find the suggested 'Green' route. We felt quite relieved when we came to the tarmac road to Keld. Howling wind and driving rain for the next two hours conditions were very poor. Finally reached Keld which was closed and decided to head for Muker, at the head of Swaledale. Low Row was a further 6 miles and by this time it was 6 pm. Arrived at the B&B in the dark at 9 pm absolutely shattered. Too tired to eat we had a cup of tea and went to bed. Awake half the night taking Paracetamol to ward off the pain in legs and feet. This day really took 2 further days to recover and put us in reasonable shape to tackle the North Yorks Moors. Dark times indeed.

We did have two of our best B&Bs on this last section, a fantastic 86 year old lady, Mrs Fletcher at Gt Broughton, where we collected all the windfall apples off her garden. This was the back end of hurricane Katia, it had nearly blown us off Carlton Bank and had made a right mess of her beautiful garden.

The best B&B of the whole 13 days was at Egton Bridge, a beautiful annex to a converted farmhouse overlooking the Eskdale valley. We had lifts in the car up and down into the village pub and back to the trail the following morning, absolutely first class.

So an achievement, yes and lots of emotion when we got to Robin Hood's Bay, dipped our feet in the sea and threw into the North Sea the pebble we had carried from St Bees in Cumbria.

Would I do it again? Well no, that box is ticked, but David might. The 13 day walking schedule is right, what we needed was two further days, slotted in as rest days, but circumstances didn't allow.

Feet are getting itchy again writing this!



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Meetings are normally held on the second
Thursday of each Month,

At Christ Church Hall, Stocksbridge at 7.00pm

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2011

July 14th

Dennis Pindar: A Trip up Manchester Road

August

Summer Recess

September 8th

Nigel Clark: The Kenworthy Brothers

October 13th

Stephen Gay: More Railway Rambles

Sunday October 23rd

Bradfield History Fair

November 10th

Malcolm Nunn: The History of Loxley Valley

Saturday December 10th

Carol Supper

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SALFORD REMEMBERED

Part 5

By A. A. McKay (1927-2009)

Mount Pleasant, although a cul-de-sac, was a very fine example of a Victorian street, especially for Salford. The houses were much larger than those we lived in, and at the top of the street was a green square, such as you might see in parts of London.



I have no idea of the class of people who might have built these houses, but they must have been quality.

I only assume that the encroachment of the working classes and their terraced houses, they must have packed their bags and moved to more salubrious surroundings. In my young days Mount Pleasant was full of families, each living in a single room and sharing the kitchen and toilet.

On my way to school I continue down Rosamond Street and here on my right as I start to turn into Ford Street was the house where our family used to live in about 1908. Just here in Ford Street was the old Fire Station, where the engines were pulled by horses. It was now a smithy and Veterinary. My Dad's old army pal Uncle George was the blacksmith. The Fire Station had a high wall with a large double door set in it and a small pedestrian door that allowed access into the yard. In the yard itself there were three folding doors to allow quick exit for the fire engines. At the side of these doors was something I have never seen since, a staircase without steps, just strips of metal across, which allowed the horses which were used to pull the engines to get a footing as they climbed up and down, to and from their stables above the engine house. The idea of horses going up and down stairs was quite amusing to my young mind. These stables in my time were used as a hospital for any sick horses the vet might be nursing back to good health.

In the left hand corner of the yard was the furnace where Uncle George handled all the hot metal. It was a pleasure to watch him form all kinds of shapes for the hoes' shoes. You would be surprised how many horses had odd shaped feet. Uncle George occasionally was good enough to make metal hoops for us youngsters to play with. He also had a good side line with my Dad. They had a machine for cutting horse hair and were particularly busy around May Day. May Day was the time for a local Pageant, when all the traders decorated their horses and carts and parade around the streets. The night before the Pageant, Dad would bring home all the horses' harness to clean. He would put them in a bag of sawdust and, for what seemed like an age, he would rock the bag back and forth, back and forth, until he thought the metal was shiny enough. On the morning of the Parade Dad would off to the stables early to polish the leather of the harness and the brasses and plait the horse's mane and put the little floral touches. It was a great day out for all the family, and it was a good excuse for Dad to enjoy a pint when the show was over.