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ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with Miss Ann Graham, West Bretton

30th December 1986

Accompanied by my daughter Sheila on a really dreadful wet day. ~~Miss Graham sees herself and her brother as the end of the line.~~ We spent about 3 or more hours there and were shown a large number of photographs featuring the family and the estate.

Miss Graham (born 1925) has already donated Mossknow material to the Society, and gave in Game Books, of much social interest, on this occasion. Her attitude to family history was refreshing, cheerful and at times quite caustic. She lives alone, but with 3 dogs, two of which were in the room with us, demonstrably affectionate. There was an interval during the visit so that the hens could be fed - and tea consumed. She sees herself & her brother as the end of the Graham line. (NB 40. discussion of the 'beginnings' of the line see paper by R.C. Reid; Trans, 1959-60). She has been researching the history of Eaglesfield for Creca WRI, of which she is a committee member.

School

Miss Graham didn't go to the local school. It was unthinkable - they would be bullied. The local children would simply not be able to comprehend people whose way of life was so different.

She did not think 'accent' would be a problem, since people could easily learn two languages. The Johnson-Ferguson girls, when young, spoke in a Scots accent in Scotland.

She thought Tom Leslie, as well as his father, may have been on the School Board.

Her great(?) - her doubt) grandmother had a dame school at the South Lodge - and also a Penny Bank.

Church

In the churchyard is what they used to call the 'dog kennel', the aisle on the North wall where her ancestor, Rev William Graham's grave had been desecrated. She thinks that may have been because after the Revolution he did not turn presbyterian.

They were Episcopalian. She thinks that may go back to her grandfather (Gordon Graham) sending the boys to Rugby. They had a pew in the local church, downstairs, and they sometimes went. Mrs Fleming sat upstairs in her balcony. She remembered Mr Fyffe, a gentle little soul, who killed himself with lycil. He'd had a throat operation and couldn't face it again. He was a clever man, but not strong either physically or in face of criticism. The congregation had, subsequently, the reputation of having 'some right 'uns', who would put

the minister to the sword.

Sport and
Entertainment

Much of this could come under 'Gentry'.

The Mossknow flower show was before her time. ~~Races~~ *There were races*
and so on. It was said to have stopped when the bell
ringer fell in the ditch and her father thereupon
decreed that 'enough is enough'. I felt that she felt
that it had become something of a drunken spree.

Her grandfather kept steeple chasers with names like
'Home Rule'. His colours were blue and silver. She
recalled it being said that they were never properly
trained, but the same was said of their other horses.
Some horses were kept at Mossknow. One was called 'Tot
Ronald'. She reckoned they'd be Irish horses, but
didn't know whether the name 'Home Rule' signified
support or opposition.

Her father had a football team for the Scouts. She had
heard of 'Mossknow Rovers' and thought that might be
the team.

She had not joined the Kirkpatrick Fleming WRI, feeling
they should have a free hand. Her mother had been much
involved with it.

She recalled no billiard room at Mossknow. But they
got up cricket teams from time to time.

She knew of coursing from Mossknow, but not - I think -
in her day, when they had no greyhounds.

They also had their own tennis courts. The courts at
Toppinghead, she thought, had been made for the benefit
of the Mackie girls (a touch of caustic here).

Hunting was part of the social scene, but not from
Mossknow. It was too dangerous to go near Cove Quarry,
where stones could easily be sent flying down. They'd
had hounds in her grandfather's time, and the girls
hunted. But Cove Quarry ~~might move~~. Besides, there
were 2 railways and 2 main roads in the way. She
remarked in another context that catching the fox
wasn't really of any importance.

*made hunting
difficult.*

Scouting was a very strong interest of her fathers. At
one time there were two troupes, Springkell and
Kirkpatrick. Fergus Graham and Brian Johnston-Ferguson
had completely different attitudes towards Scouting.
Fergus Graham was much more old fashioned,
Baden-Powell's ideas, whereas Johnson Ferguson took
many more risks and was more 'modern'.

One of her exhibits was a printed programme, dated 29th August 1907 of a Dramatic Show put on by members of the household - with, for example, Fergus Graham and Elliot Lockhart taking part in a sketch.

They always had a gamekeeper. Hogg - the one who got the sack (1911) - is depicted in one photo. Later McDonald. Shooting was poor during the war.

In one of her photos was Dunbar, the station master. I think she mentioned him in a cricketing context.

A photo of the junior Red Cross - undated - has Sadie Thomson, Fiona Halliday, Mary Rae, Helen Miller and Lorna (?) Mills (?).

Economic

Again, since the interview was about Mossknow, it is artificial to abstract some items as 'Economic', while leaving others under 'Gentry'. An attempt, nevertheless, is made:-

She thought the Colonel (?) had been on the board of the Caledonian Railway Company.

When she was young there were rabbits everywhere.

She seemed to say that there were two sawmills on the estate at one time. After the Great War her father gave John Johnstone (shell shocked), £5 to set up his own business. There was another sawmill higher up - tho' not in her memory.

She mentioned incidentally that the Eaglesfield ^SSmithy was at Kirtle. She thought the Greens made suits for the staff at Springkell and for her Uncle John Bell-Irving. l.c

There was a mystery - to her - about an earlier 'terrible crash' at Kirtle Bridge. She had read that a crash had happened, but had not been able to find details. She did remember the railway turntable at Kirtle Bridge.

Her mother had an ambulance group, who went to help at Quintingshill, but it was really no place for amateurs, who couldn't face the ~~courage~~, and most of the work was left to the professionals. /

carnage

The remains of the soup kitchen wall were long to be seen in the car park. It was riddled with rats. The farmers used to bring in produce.

She remembered the transition period when Notwen House stopped having permanent inmates - 'the funny old men' went away.

She had an old map - now in the burgh museum - which predated the Hollee road. 'Flemingshaw' is marked, and there were a lot of clachans around the farms.

Quintingshill - her uncle (Bell-Irving) went over, and her mother drove some to the infirmary.

Gentry

The story of the 18th century murder was that there was trouble over a girl with John Scott of Beltenmont. Two Scotts set on Fergus Graham with flails, so he drew his sword and killed one. He was never brought to court. The Kirkyard memorial has a Victorian plinth. She thinks there is also a Rosina Scott in Beltenmont stone nearby.

Fergus never had the estate. Reverend William Graham left it to William who was bankrupt. The family was Jacobite. The story was that William hid Kirkpatrick Sharpe of Hoddam (a Jacobite) in the Mossknow pigsties.

There is an old archway, possibly part of the old house, with a 17th century marriage stone in the wall - but she thinks the stone had been moved from an earlier position. The stableyard stones are very old. The marriage stone is in a gateway into the garden - William Graham and Margaret Irving. Her father told her that the original house had been burnt down (probably before 1765, when the new one was planned), but she has never found any documentary evidence of this.

She had some interesting and not always flattering comments on the other families. Mrs Fleming of Woodhouse thought of herself as a great lady. The Johnston-Fergusons were a law unto themselves. Sir Jabez Edward - a Manchester Jew - was alleged to 'have bought' his title. He promised money for the title, got it, but never paid up - so the story goes. Someone found out about it, and made sure that everyone else in the locality knew too (which is no doubt why I've heard part of the story before). Sir Jabez Edward was the sort who always wanted to solve disputes by going to law. But Alex., the scholar, was ~~alright.~~ all right.

