

ANN HILL BEQUEST

Interview with Miss Molly Mackie

23rd September, 1986

Miss Mackie - and her sister Annie - had been mentioned to me as the hub of parish social life. She herself, now living in Lochmaben, describes herself as probably the oldest surviving inhabitant. Her memory seems very clear. In her house are a number of prints of Gretna, where, I think her forebears came. Her father was, I think Hugh Mackie, her mother from Cumberland.

Sport and  
Entertainment

She was very active in the tennis club, which was (at first) where the old bowling green was, in Newton, and then at Toppinghead (I think given land by Mrs. Rae). It stopped around World War II. Tennis probably started at the manse - Mr. Walker kept it cut for them. Alan Hogg played at holiday time. Others were J. Burnett, Harry Davidson, John Mackie - I think these were regarded as the best players. The players used to leave their tennis shoes in the club, but Jenny Graham (at the end of the season?) took them all home, cleaned them and tried to pair them - a rather useless activity, since as soon as the new season started people just put on any two that seemed to fit. Bill Walker also a good player.

Bowling - the old green was at the back of a Cobbler's shop, too far away to be convenient.

Football, at the Station field took a lot of people away from the tennis. (I have a note 'In Kirkpatrick house, Ham(?) mother - go back to field - wooden hut - no toilet facilities. I think this must refer to the tennis court).

Social Club - run by Mr. Rae, Schoolmaster - a few years - good speakers.

The Orchestra - Molly was in, and her sister pianist. Organised by Mr. Walker, 17 fiddles (?) She was later in (and organiser off) country dance teams, of which she showed me photographs from their numerous victories. I got down some of the names - Moira Johnston, Mrs. Wyllie, Molly Mackie, Annie Lamont, Mrs. Collinge, Miss Johnston (married Lindsay Irving). Mrs. Turnbull - Miss Hill (dressmakers - possibly in farm, Clarencefield Area), Mrs. Hyslop (sister? of Miss Hill - President Dumfriesshire W.R.I.).

Mrs. Collinge played at their classes and festivals, Annie not confident enough for that.

The hub of the social life was Mr. & Mrs. Kerr, of the Poorhouse, who arranged the Poorhouse Concert, a great occasion - once a year. The inmates watched for so long and then were sent to bed - very elite.

There were loads of Whist Drives, and a lot of bridge was played, mainly in houses. She still plays at Lochmaben, of which she was treasurer for a number of years.

Musical evenings were the big thing.

She quoted 'old Mr. Davidson' saying that there used to be a special trains for shooting parties in (?) 'Sir Jabis' time'.

W.R.I. also mentioned.

#### Church

She went to Chapelknowe United Free Church. ('Precentor' - was she precentor?). She was organist for 32 years.

Rev. John Walker was a wonderful man, great family friend. (?She has an etching of Redhouse done by him). After leaving Chapelknowe, she went to the parish church. Rev. Eric Duncan moved on, quite well known. Also McKenzie.

Hayfield were great United Free Church people.

#### School

They had a little sale of work for books for the village school, which the head wanted. When she was there Percy Topless (now famous as the 'Monocled Mutineer') came in and was given a cup of tea. 2 days later he was shot at Penrith. He slept at West Bretton the night before.

The Whipper-in, and registrar was J.B. Leslie, the violin maker, who lived at Mossknow Lodge. She had very recently sent three of his violins to the sale rooms.

After the Gretna rail crash, the schoolmaster - the rascalry old Christie - got the pupils to write to the relatives of the soldiers. (Notes - 'all brought potato - very funny. I think he told them they were to bring produce to supplement his wages). She showed a school photo with him in it. Miss Murray also taught her.

Old people talked about Blackie Brown, the previous teacher - old and doddering. Others - Christie - McKerchar - Rae (I have Gringer in brackets) whose daughter married Roddick the auctioneer, and died 2 years ago.

Later, Hogg, whose son married Edith Walker. During the war Mr. Doull, who is still alive in Ayr.

Another note I can't translate, perhaps to do with the school - 'Trans?/Trams? - (Trains?) 13 years - MacMillan, Monday night - Jess Dickie, Doull started, to Newington).

(? 'Two Henderson - Dr. Anderson - sister = Rogers, surveyor).

(This is followed by 'Doull - Hogg - Hope - which makes me think it relates to the school).

In a school photo she thought she identified these:- Minnie Moffat, Jenny (?) Johnston (now in Lockerbie), George White, Sam Byers, Tom Murray, Tom McKay, George Moffat (garage), Willie Walker (Manse), Jim Collinge, Colin Davidson, Elsie McLellan, Jess Murray (mother of Rev. William Niven), Kath Johnston (still unmarried, lives in Annan).

#### Economic

Mr. & Mrs. Noon had an emporium. Moffats - whose descendants still own, were in business. Forestry workers from British Honduras. A sawmill at Mossknow - now crossed by A74. The A74 closed the top avenue to Mossknow (East Lodge).

Cove Quarry.

Nat Wallace made clerical grey suits. After him there was no local tailor but there were good ones in Eaglesfield.

There was always a good blacksmith at Merkland until the last one, Irving.

The A74 also cut through Redhouse.

## People

Fergus Graham gave the impression of being something of an intellectual, although she wasn't aware of any notable achievements. Ann Graham - highly regarded, not John. Previous Grahams were the Colonel and the General.

Dr./Mrs. Carruthers brought all into the world.

The Mackies had one of the earliest local cars - a Swift. (I think Molly had two brothers).

She thought the Kerrs in the Poorhouse rather severe. Followed by - she thought - Richardson.

On the Council were, at different times, Mr. Beattie and Brian Johnson-Ferguson. The Beatties bought Wyseby Mains - see Campbell/Sheena Beattie.

Fergus Graham married Else Bell-Irving (from, I think, Whitehill).

Mrs. Little owned (?) Cove - (Obscure notes - 'Lovely' or 'lonely' - but seems the former - tall, elegant, lovely (?) head. Red Cross detachment).

Dr. P.M. Carlyle - the Oaks - descendant of Thomas Carlyle.

## Miscellaneous

Vagrants disliked going to the Poorhouse, where they were bathed by Mr. & Mrs. Kerr. They preferred a barn. They wore grey denim overalls and had a very spartan existence. She remembered one old man in the Poorhouse who had been a top 5 in hand driver - a rare accomplishment.

There were a great many wells, especially at Redhall. A field past Redhouse was called the Spoutfield, and supplied Grahamshill. (I think). ('Further along field beautiful well - covered over, Ann Graham found bottom half').

She had a remarkable photo taken just before the Gretna disaster. The men were working in the fields just before. When the disaster occurred the local Red Cross, organised by Miss/Mrs. Graham were first on the scene - including, if I've got the story right at least one of the Mackies.

Miss Mackie had a story, which I have not noted in detail, concerning her namesakes, Miss Mackie, and the

Raes. But, anyway, the facts are well known.

I have also noted, but cannot recall why 'Two Miss Smiths'.

Mr. Rae - Hamish's father - was prominent in the orchestra.

Sport and  
Entertainment

They had a lovely big village hall at which badminton and dances took place.

[ I now know the explanations to a number of the doubtful points, but I have left them in as part of the 'history of the history'. This was my first major interview, and we can see how little of the parish background I then knew ]