

Peter Irving Rae, Kirkpatrick House - Growing Up (1923-1935)

This memoir was written mainly for his family by Peter Rae, who was born/brought up in Kirkpatrick House. His father James Rae died when Peter was only 3 years old, and Mary Rae continued to live there with their four children (Hamish, Peggy, Peter and Jack).



Earliest Memory

Unlike many people I have almost no memories of very early years. Apart from fleeting images of my father in a tweed suit and standing beside his car (reg no SM 7), only one recollection can be counted as significant.



I was staying, overnight at least, at Shawrigg in my grandparents' time there - before they moved to live with my mother at Kirkpatrick House. This probably places the event in the weeks following my father's death, in which case it would have been the spring of 1927 when I was rising four. I recall being carried downstairs for breakfast

and having my clothes removed from one of the cool ovens of the black kitchen range where they had been put to warm up. Later, the same day perhaps, I walked with Uncle Jim and Uncle Graham along the holms until we reached the gate to the 3rd holm where they left me so that they could look to a calving cow (I suspect). Left to myself, and soon surrounded by a number of *very large sheep* I took fright and ran for home in great distress and tears. Uncle Jim was not to let me forget the incident in later years ... perhaps this is what kept it alive in my memory.

Village School

The only other early memory I have is of the day on which I started school ... presumably just after turning five. I recall very clearly that Miss Grace Jardine sat me in a double front desk beside my cousin Catherine Irving who already had six months seniority on me, and although just six months older than me, she was in the year ahead. I was issued with a slate and a slate pencil along with a lump of scruffy felt which was evidently to be used to 'wipe the slate clean'. Miss Jardine was a largish, motherly, youngish lady who exuded comfort and sympathy, and with her and Catherine's help my introduction to primary schooling was not a difficult one. 'The rest is silence'.



After two years there was promotion to the Junior Department. Years three and four were presided over by the widely known and universally feared Miss Grace Douglas. Her classroom discipline had to be experienced to be believed and her methods would not today find universal favour, for slapping, hair-pulling, strapping and shouting were amongst her normal methods. Pupils and parents alike went in awe of the lady for her fame spread beyond the classroom. Her standards were demanding and were thoroughly applied - though not altogether unfairly and she obviously recognised talent, for she was the only teacher in that School who ever awarded me 1st place in the prize list! That distinction otherwise always went to one Molly Goldie each of whose four siblings won the Dr Carruthers Memorial Medal at the end of year seven.)



Miss Douglas arrived by train each morning from Carlisle (she lived at Scotby) and her face was carefully searched each morning to discover the 'day's disasters', for on this a great deal depended. She left the school before the war, but returned for a second stint around 1948, a much mellowed lady and pedagogue, when she taught both Helen and Ian in her usual thorough manner. I was able to reciprocate when in the late 1960s I taught her two great-nephews David and Andrew Douglas at Carlisle Grammar School. She appreciated this for I met her finally in Binns store during this time.

Years five and six were presided over by a very different kind of teacher. Miss Mackay, who was one of a legion of young teachers recruited by the Dumfriesshire Authority from Aberdeenshire at this time, was as kind, gentle and smiling as Miss Douglas was grim and harsh and my one and a half years with her were very happy and productive ones. She left for Noblehill School in Dumfries and for a time we were looked after by a long and thin young man called Mr Troup whose distinction (which greatly impressed all in a tiny Scottish village) was that he had been a missionary in faraway Egypt!



In charge of Year seven (the examination year) was the 'Master' himself - Mr Hogg. John Hogg was a man 'severe ... and stern to view', who ... 'every truant knew', but kindly on a good day, and a model of a good village schoolmaster of the 'old school'. Of the 12 or so members of my class of 35 whose names I can recall, five of the seven boys were killed in action (Irving, Walter, Harry, Jackie and Randolph), only Billy and me

surviving, while all of the five girls (Molly, Annie, Isma, Ethel and Mary) are around to this day (when this was written circa 2000).



Hamish and Peggy had left Kirkpatrick School and had gone to Annan Academy - staying during the week with Great Auntie Kate at Victoria Avenue there, and returning home each weekend. Around 1930, having passed through the Junior Department at Annan, Hamish went on to Dumfries Academy (staying in a hostel there) while Peggy started at the Red Gables School in Carlisle.

In May 1935 my Kirkpatrick class was transported to Gretna School to sit the Qualifying Examination (or 11+), for selection purposes. (Those who 'passed' went on to Lockerbie Academy while the others stayed on in the village school for two more years.) It was my first experience of a public examination and my first view of a printed exam paper which left sufficient impression on me that I can still quote the Scott passage for interpretation!

Later that month, Mother took Jack and me to Edinburgh to sit an entrance examination for Watsons. The experience was daunting for two lads from a small village school. In a **huge** examination hall were rows and rows of individual tables and supervised by masters in **gowns**, sat upwards of 150 boys, all in maroon blazers, with their heads down and in perfect silence. Several more printed exam papers were produced and we were expected to perform in these terrifying and daunting surroundings. The wonder, in retrospect, is perhaps that we should not have been quite overwhelmed, but in fact we survived and better, for it was rumoured that one at least had got 100% in the arithmetic paper. Whether true or not I know not for sure, but in the event I was allocated from amongst 100+ Watsons pupils (who already had Latin by the way), to Form 1A when the School opened that September.

In June I finished with Kirkpatrick Fleming Public School - when I said goodbye to the School, to staff and to fellow pupils (many for the last time) in particular to those who were to perish on the battle fields of Normandy and North Africa. (Molly Goldie, needless to say, was awarded the Gold Medal.) I have always felt gratitude to the School which gave me such a good start and a wonderful grounding in the 'three Rs', a foundation which served me in very good stead in a further 12 years of education of various kinds. On 12th August the family packed up and left Kirkpatrick for the village suburb of **Balerno** on Edinburgh's southern edge, and on 1st September Jack and I enrolled as two extremely nervous First Year **Watson's Boys**.

Play Times:

Jack and I, and of course our siblings and cousins, were the most fortunate of youngsters in the facilities afforded by our everyday surroundings - our 'home ground' consisting of two adjoining family farms of around 150 acres altogether. Add to that the boundaries which were simply an added challenge and our world was without limit. These boundaries did, however, provide our Mother with some assurance as to our whereabouts, though had she know half of the truth she might not have been so reassured! The two farms were, of course, Kirkpatrick House (where we lived with Mother and her parents) and Shawrigg where Mother had lived until her marriage in 1917. After Father's death in 1926 her parents joined her from Shawrigg, leaving the farm to her brother (our Uncle Jim, Aunt Ann and cousins Catherine and Dorothy).



The boundaries were - to the south the glorious River Kirtle, to the west the woods and estate of Cove, to the north the main railway line and to the east the large estate of Mossknowe. The river was a natural limit with not much new on the other side to tempt explorers except more farmland, but the great woods and quarries of Cove (not to mention its Cave) were an exciting draw. The railway line provided its own special attractions, while the Mossknowe Estate formed the most effective barrier - providing little natural cover and being fairly well patrolled! Within these limits was an abundance of woods and streams, of trees and hedges (for climbing and bird-nesting), of ponds and scrambles, of adventure and education, of pleasure and danger ... a world of knowledge and experience.

In that plethora of choice, undoubtedly the most rewarding were the three water courses. The small *Shawrigg Burn* was of minor importance providing us only with some opportunities to develop our landscaping talents here and there. The *Kirkpatrick Burn*, however, was a bird of a different feather. Rising in the Gillshaw Moss (about 4 miles to the north of the village) it entered 'our territory' through a tunnel beneath the railway and the main A74 road. This tunnel was about 60 yards long - dark, of uncertain footing and an adventure in itself for in addition to the darkness the muffled sounds of traffic far above were quite disturbing. The stream emerged from the tunnel in the Station Wood, fell over a 10 ft waterfall and entered our fairyland for about 300 yards before it passed the farm and then plunged through a deep sandstone gorge, emerging to enter the *River Kirtle* in a further 200 yards. The Station Wood was the largest of our 'forests' and contained spoil heaps from a disused quarry and the village rubbish tip amongst many other attractions.

Before the stream reached the farm (Kirkpatrick House), it passed under a small 18th century arched road bridge which provided the ideal launch pad for one of our favourite pastimes. Much later this was christened 'Pooh Sticks' by some upstart author! The rules of the game were complicated and variable according to the circumstances (what do you do if your ship get stuck under a waterfall for instance), but the one invariable rule was **NO TOUCHING** by hand or other implement (but throwing stones at it was OK). The course was about 400 yards long and ended when one ship reached the River Kirtle. The chosen naval craft, for the connoisseur, were empty shoe polish tins which were found aplenty on the village rubbish dump.



Fish were not found regularly in this burn but eels were, and these were discovered to be able to climb a 10 foot bank and cross a field to reach our favourite pond, for we found them in there. This pond, a hole left when stone was extracted by our great-uncle John Bell (c 1850) to build the new Kirkpatrick House, was a Mecca for us as well as for a great variety of wild life. Frogs, toads and newts were permanent residents as well as such a variety of fresh-water life as can be found only in biology text books - great water beetles, water boatmen, pond skaters, leeches and many more. This little pond gave endless days of pleasure and education to Jack and me.

The major waterway in our repertoire was, however, the *River Kirtle*. Rising above the Winterhope reservoir at Kirtlehead, it travelled about 15 miles before entering the Cove Woods near Kirtlebridge. It flowed another mile or so through the woods before reaching the end of Shawrigg Farm and past a further half-mile or so of meadow land until it arrived at the weir which served the Beltenmont Mill and the end of our interest in it. From the Peel Hole footbridge to the Mill, every foot of its progress was known to Jack and me - where the trout lay up under the banks, where the rarer wild flowers were to be found (we **could** find the scarlet pimpernel) and where to hear and see the best grasshoppers and the biggest dragonflies. Its progress was a succession of rapids and shallows as well as of some pools quite deep enough for swimming (up to six feet deep) with rocks and trees for use as diving or other platforms. Swimming was indeed the main attraction, especially as we got older, and our Kirtle provided pools for all occasions - deep pools, rocky pools, pools with the best diving facilities and pools which were thought to be rather daring such as the 'Boiling Pot'. First of all one had to learn how to swim and Jack beat me to this. That deficiency on my part was, however, quickly

cured one day when Hamish and Alan Hogg threw me into the middle of the deepest pool. I learned fast that day!

Swimming apart, there was much to be explored. Wading and paddling introduced us to another world of wildlife - fish. Minnows of all sizes were ubiquitous in the shallows, while Barbel and Miller's Thumb had to be searched for beneath the stones where shrimps and many beetle larvae also abounded. The kings of the river were, of course, the Brown Trout and good fishing for these was to be had by our elders and betters. King-Emperor was however the beautiful, silver, pink-fleshed Sea Trout or Herling. There were to be had only at certain seasons and at high water, and only by fishers more skilled than Jack or me. There were accounts of rare encounters with Salmon and even Solway Plaice but these were exceptional.

One of our early lessons was on the day we discovered about sunburn! We had spent the whole of a brilliant summer day shirtless and up to our knees in the river until, in the later afternoon, hunger as well as a feeling of distinct unease drove us home. By the time we got there our backs were like ripe tomatoes and we spent the next couple of days in agony on our stomachs on our beds getting less than fullest sympathy but having our backs powdered with flour from time to time. It was a lesson well and painfully learned.

At the lower end of our range was the old grain mill at Beltenmont which was supplied by a lade from the aforementioned weir. In these early days the mill was still in occasional use, and we used to spend time talking with the old miller, the ancient Mr James Fraser - who had a long beard, a clay pipe and a large fund of stories for small boys. On my return to Shawrigg in 1950, Mr Fraser and the mill had quite disappeared leaving not a trace of the once three-storied building except for one or two tired-looking millstones to remind one of the past glories.

This then was the benign River Kirtle of our youthful summers, but it did occasionally have its darker side. I have three times witnessed it in full flood, completely covering the whole of the flat meadow land and on one occasion completely removing the substantial footbridge ad Peel Hole. I cannot recall the dates but they must have been c1933, c1937 and c1953.

The Farms

Much of our play consisted of 'help' with the many jobs around the farms. These were not arduous in the case of Kirkpatrick House, for Mother employed a kindly old retainer to see to the shepherding and stock-keeping required by the grass lettings as well as to repairs and gardening. This was Mark McCartney, a gentle, white-haired and moustachioed old chap who was friend to everyone. He was assisted in his duties by our grandfather who was by then fast losing his eyesight but was still of help with the garden and with sawing logs etc, if Mark was there to guide the saw. [I visited him in 1950 when I returned to the district - he was then confined to his fireside chair but expressed himself delighted to see me.] There remained little for Jack and me to do except inspect the roofs and keep a watchful eye.

At Shawrigg things were different for there were lots of useful things to be done around a working dairy farm - calves had to be fed, fodder and bedding had to be carried, turnips to be sliced, cows to be mustered, eggs to be collected and horses to be tended amongst a host of other things. Harvest, of course, was the most exciting time when carts had to be loaded and unloaded, empty carts made good use of and horses led and quite often ridden (bareback of course).

The Villages:

Because Kirkpatrick House stood halfway between the church and the manse, our nearest neighbours were the incumbent minister and his family. When I was born and christened this was the Rev John Walker but he left soon afterwards for Johnstonebridge. Some family members remained in touch. William vanishes into the business world but his younger brother, the red-headed Dod, visited us in Balerno during the war - to Mother's joy for he was her favourite apparently. He was then in the army and hating every minute.

The next minister was the young and universally liked William Wilson Fyffe who occupied the manse with his unmarried sister, both of whom were extremely popular members of the community. The church at this time enjoyed a period of real significance in the community life which hummed with activities of all kinds - WRI, Guild, Bowls, Badminton and whatever else. It came as a great shock, therefore, when not long after we left the district we learned that Mr Fyffe had committed suicide. I was present when his successor, the Rev Eric Duncan conducted his introductory service and preached what stays with me as the best sermon I have ever heard. (He preached on Hebrews, Chapter 11.)

Across the railway from the manse was the railway station and the school yard. The Master when I started school was Mr James Rae (no relation), but he soon moved away and the Hogg family arrived. John Hogg was a fairly stern but quite popular and active member of the village life. Alan Hogg was a year older than Hamish but the two were great friends from school at Dumfries Academy, through early working years in Edinburgh, through their army careers (they were both officers with the Royal Artillery at home and in India and Burma), and for the rest of their lives. Both died in 1996. Betty Hogg was my contemporary but I never got to know her well.

The stationmaster was Mr Richardson whose daughter Mabel taught piano to many village children including me. The porter (for we had this as well in 1930) was Jack Crossan whose son Jack was in my class but killed in Normandy in 1944. The signalmen featured largely in our lives as some would let us walk over the lines to get to school, while others most certainly would **not** and watched as we crossed the bridge, reporting any misdemeanours to our mother. John Smith was of the latter persuasion, a very stern and very red-faced and angry man. I would go home from school by another way when I knew he was in the box. Another signalman at the time was Tom Sawyer, who had been in the box at the time of the great Quintinshill Rail Disaster in 1915 when some 300 troops were killed as two troop trains collided. Later in the 1950s, Tom came

to Shawrigg to help with threshing days. He was a lovely old character whose life had been blighted.

The centre of village life was Moffat's shop. George Moffat (the founder) was dead by my time, and the business was run by his younger son Tom who was shopkeeper and petrol pump attendant. Tom's older brother George kept up the clogging tradition while presiding silently in the notorious 'Moffat's back shop' over the day's gossip and was even then acquiring a 'reputation' as a repairer of distressed motor cars. In the 1960s, after their deaths, Tom's sons George and Hamish carried on the tradition - George being the engineer, and Hamish being the businessman. Hamish died suddenly in the 1970s leaving young George (III) and his wife Beth (Rogerson) in full charge.

Next door to the shop lived old Mrs Currie, the village midwife who had, at first, refused to appear for my arrival because it was on 1st April - she apparently forgave me the 'joke' (as she thought), because as a small boy I was frequently asked in for a cup of cocoa after school. In fact I recall going to her for lunch over a considerable period ... don't know why! The village pub (the Station Inn) was tenanted at this time by John Bell (his son John was in my school class), while over the road Mrs Noon presided over a rival emporium to Moffat's shop, assisted by her attractive daughter Peggy, and selling (as far as I can recall) mostly bread and sweets.

Beside the pub a new house was built around this time. This was the spacious two-storey 'Greenside' built (for their retirement from farming at Grahamshill) by the brothers David and William Broatch and their sister Grace. They were cousins of our grandmother Grace Campbell or Irving - and here, too, I was often asked in for a cup of cocoa after school. Apart from the blacksmith Mark Simpson (lately successor to Jim Graham) and the village Hall and the district poorhouse (now Notwen House, an old folks home), that just about completed the village at that time - aside from a few cottages occupied by Henry Graham (coal merchant), the district nurse, Mark McCartney (above) and the Misses Bessie and Jenny Graham who were stalwarts of the church choir. There, too, I even was known to drink cocoa from time to time (my cocoa capacity at that time must have been considerable!). There remained 'Holmwood', the site of the female school where our grandmother Margaret Mackie, 'skilled to rule ... taught her little school'. Lastly another newish house named 'Georgefield' - the house was later purchased by Mr and Mrs Tom Irving (parents of Young Tom), when they retired from butchering and their butcher's shop. That, then, was the village of Kirkpatrick.

Another community, Newton, gathered round the farm of that name, was not so well known to us boys. Apart from the farm I recall the grocer's shop managed by our Uncle Graham until he died (in 1936) when it was taken over by his assistant Jean Craig, before she married the tenant of Newton Farm, Jim Connell. Then there was the 'Hamper', or Victoria Terrace - a warren of miserable flats built to house the workers in Cove Quarry in the middle of the 19th century. After the war, these sad flats were bought over by the county council and considerably improved as council houses.

Just a few characters from this village stay in the memory. There was Nat Wallace (the village tailor whose son Irving was my best friend at school), more than one family of Johnstones, the McEwan family and the Forteiths. One of these

Johnstones was Jock (a cobbler) who with his sons Bill, Jock and Murray carried on quite a good trade then and for many years after. They were still in business when I returned in 1950. A brother of Jock (named George but universally called 'Doodlie') carried on a similar business in a hut built of railway sleepers and situated near the railway bridge at Toppinghead. Here Doodlie, using a tool I have never seen since, sliced out soles for clogs from birch or alder wood and made them up into the finest of wooden-soled clogs. He was always good for a chat on one's way home from school. He did not say much by way of conversation, but must have been a good listener ... or a very patient one for I recall many hours spent in his little workshop, even taking my 'piece' in there on some days.

To the south of Newton Village lay the remains of the once prosperous Cove Estate, the old dwelling house was in an advanced state of disrepair, and the stable block was even worse. Owned until then by one Lady Greville Ermingarde Nugent, it had been tenanted for a long time by Captain MacLeod Little, then for a short time by some of the Bell-Murray family. The last of the estate farms of Shawrigg and Duns Kellyrig had been sold off (Shawrigg to my grandfather & Uncle Jim), and now in 1931 the remainder was bought by a Mr James Ritchie (from Glasgow it was rumoured). The Bell-Murrays asked Mother for help to house their large collection of Afghan Hounds and Border Terriers for a time, and so it was that Kirkpatrick House was home for upwards of 20 such animals early in 1933. Mr and Mrs Ritchie took up residence in the spring of 1933 and set about making it a tourist attraction. They opened up the cave on the riverside, reckoned to have been a refuge for our national hero, and were developing other facilities when war broke out and virtually put an end to their ambitions. After the war the effort was continued with the establishment of a caravan site etc, but the enterprise never again lived up to its early promise. Today it is in the hands of Mr Ritchie's older son Andrew, while his younger son James is my friend in Carlisle. To the south again were the two small communities of Irvington and Hollee, but for two small boys they were somewhat out of range.

Farms and Farmers:

To the south-east of the property lay the once considerable estate of Mossknowe which, together with Springkell were the two most important 'houses' in the parish. Once including upwards of a score of farms, Mossknowe was at this time reduced to just a handful with an elegant mansion house. The estate was acquired by the Graham family from the Irvings, when in 1651 one William Graham married a Margaret Irving - while the house (built in the 1760s) is of classic Palladian style. The high days of the estate were perhaps in the mid nineteenth century when the owner was General John Gordon Graham, since when its fortunes have declined. In 1930 the owner was Captain Fergus Graham, whose family of three was contemporaneous with ours. The older son John being considered unfit for the ownership, the younger one (James) was groomed for stardom. James was of an age with our Jack and was an agreeable young man who was a friend of Hamish and myself in the 1950s, but who was killed in an air crash leaving the estate wholly in the hands of the daughter Anne (of my age). On one occasion about 1933, Jack and I were invited to a birthday party which is the only time

I have seen in or around the house and gardens. Today, I believe the large house is divided into flats.

Amongst the Mossknowe farms at around this time were Calvertsholm (Mr Jim Mackie), Riggheads (Mr Charlie Armstrong), East Scales and West Scales and Hillhead to the south of the river. To the north were Grahamshill, Redhouse and Redhall (the Mackie family - John, Charles, Annie and Molly ... all active church members), Nouthill (Andrew Burnett), Cranberry (Jim Burnett) and Williamsfield (Willie Rogerson). Various children were contemporaries eg John Mackie of Calvertsholm and Tom Burnett of Cranberry were in Jack's class at school while John Rogerson was my classmate. Farther to the north lay the farms of Raeburnhead, Southwoodhead and Hayfield.

Hayfield was farmed by the Davidson family - John Davidson senior was dead by then, his widow was a friend of our grandmother, while the seven sons were to leave their marks on the community. Andrew (the eldest) married to Greta Farish, took the farm of Lucemains, Ecclefechan, where Jack spent an apprenticeship of three years in years to come. George (2nd son) married, and his first job was in the Sudan (estimating the cotton crop), John (4th son) married and lived in Edinburgh, while Jim (5th son) married Agnes Farish and bought /farmed Hillhead after the death of Jimmy Elliott. (I spent a month of 'experience' with them in 1941 towards my degree course.) Irvine (7th son) married Peggy Rogerson (Williamsfield) and farmed at Muirhouse, Lockerbie, while Harry and Colin were both unmarried and remained at Hayfield. Jim's son Colin now runs Hayfield since Harry's and Colin's death, and Gillian lives in the farmhouse. The remaining farms on that side (Dunskellyrig, Fauldingcleuch and Woodhouse) were largely out of our ken.

That leaves just two farms to be described. Wicketthorn, which had once been farmed circa 1750-1850 by the Rae family, was now in the hands of the Beatties. Thomas and Hannah (she was the older sister of my grandmother Grace Campbell) came from Torduff, Dornock, when the War Department took over the farm/land for the construction of HM Factory Gretna - my grandparents having left the Loch Fisheries at Dornock and came to Shawrigg in about 1900. I never knew Tom Beattie senior, but Aunt Hannah was still around at this time and their son Thomas Little Beattie was well in charge when I became aware, and had recently married Jeannie Drysdale from Dumfries. Tom ruled everything and everybody ... farm, family, church and village (he was later to become county councillor) with a firm hand. Their family consisted of five children all of whom would attend Edinburgh University. Anna became a mathematics teacher in Dumfries and Edinburgh (Heriots), Sheena a mathematics teacher in Dumfries and then Annan, Campbell took over the farm (after graduating in Agriculture from Edinburgh University), Mary became a science teacher in Aberdeen and Jennifer would become a General Practitioner in Northumberland.

Last of all was **Newton Farm**. This farm had been in the Rae family since around 1700, farmed then by our patriarch John Rae (1727-1796). Following the death of my Great Grandfather Matthew Rae in 1874, it was farmed by his son Peter Rae for two years until his death in 1876. It then passed into the hands of Peter's brother - my grandfather James Rae (I) who was at that time also in possession of Kirkpatrick House, so for the first time the two properties became linked. Following my

grandfather's death in 1894 the farm of Newton was let and when I first became aware, the tenant was one Selby Griffin. He died/left about 1932 when it was let to the brothers James and David Connell. David soon left, James married Jean Craig (above) and the couple had two sons. At this point the law of tenancy was altered giving security of tenure to farmers' sons and it became clear that we were never likely to have access to the farm again in our lifetime. It was, therefore, sold in 1947 in order to help finance the purchase of East Morrison for Jack and me in April 1947. Since then fortunes have changed - both the Connell boys moved on following the death of their parents and c1970 Hamish's son Graham bought back the farmhouse and part of the land, setting up a successful agricultural contractors' business there.

Family

This brings us finally to **Kirkpatrick House**. From 1926, following my father's death, we had been a family of seven - including my grandparents. Mother had been in poor health for some years and now that of her parents was failing too. Grandma had had a serious cancer of the throat before the First World War and it was threatening to recur. My grandfather was by now nearly blind, while Mother herself had had several operations for cancer and other ills. In 1934 Hamish had left Dumfries Academy and had gone to work in Penicuik for the Commercial Bank of Scotland there, while Peggy was about to leave her school (Red Gables in Carlisle) and would be seeking work or further training. In addition, Jack and I were about to complete our primary schooling and the question of secondary education would arise. Would that be in Lockerbie, or Dumfries or perhaps elsewhere? In short it looked as though the family was about to break up.

In an attempt to keep us all together she decided (reluctantly I'm sure) that we should leave the family home. Educational considerations suggested that Edinburgh would be a good choice (her brother Peter being already there) so a search was made for a suitable home in the area ... hence the competitive exam for entry into Watsons. A suitable place was found and the matter of the farm was solved when a neighbour (Robert C Davidson from East Scales) who wished to retire asked to have the tenancy. Mother agreed, partly because Mr Davidson hinted that he would be ready to relinquish the farm if and when 'any of your boys' wanted it in the future. That was settled and preparations were made for removal. Mother heard that our application for Watsons had been accepted as well as her offer for the house in Balerno so all was set, and on the 12th of August we departed our birthplace, some of us for good.

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