

## **Hetha Bruce** *Lowick 1936-2009*

The Fairbairn family came to live at Barmoor South Moor farm in May 1936. It was a grass farm, mainly green fields and moorland.

It was a beautiful day with bright sunshine. The whins on the moor were in full bloom, and everything was so peaceful. We also had the magnificent view of the Cheviot Hills. Although I was only 11 years old, going on 12, I felt I had arrived at the most wonderful place. This is how I still feel whenever I go to Barmoor South Moor. There have been many changes to the road, and the house now has all mod cons. The following Monday, we had to start school in Lowick, Billy, Connie, and myself. My eldest sister Bell was working, and Margaret was at grammar school.

Neen Slater, who lived on the farm and was about the same age as myself, escorted us to school. It was a long walk to Lowick. Firstly, we came to the crossroads, better known as the Blue House. The people (Swan) who lived there had a small shop in the front garden. They sold a variety of goods plus cigs and sweets.

We were quite a big family, as we had a younger brother Neil (2 years old), so we got very few pennies for sweets. Moving on past High Steads, we continued our long walk to Lowick. We came to the Police House first, the policeman was Jim Atkinson. The cottage next door is still standing; it has had lots of improvements and is occupied by Brian and Brenda Carr. Then we came to the Common; it was very rough ground, not cared for by Berwick Council as it is today.

Looking across the Common, one could see the Drill Hall, Scotch Church, part of the Commercial Inn, and surrounding houses as seen today.

On the Common, next to the main road, was a large round stone building called the Penfold; we usually called it Pin Fad. Stray cattle or sheep could be housed there overnight. In the 1950s, it was demolished. I don't remember why this happened, but later, people said this should not have happened as it was part of Lowick's history.

We came along South Road to the Main Street. On the right was a bakery and shop run by the Mabon family. They were noted for their brown bread, morning rolls, and pies, along with lots of other things. At one time, they had 3 or 4 vans on the road. On the left side of the road, Mrs Clare Foreman had a small sweet shop. Adjoining the bakery house was a bank; this opened two mornings a week.

The blacksmith's shop came next; this was always a very busy place. The horse was the main means of work on the farms, so was often being shod. A very smart house behind a high stone wall turned out to be the School House, occupied by Mr and Mrs Nichol. Mr Nichol was the school's headmaster.

Eventually, we were introduced to Mr Nichol and placed in our various classes. It was a daunting experience. We had packed lunches. Tin tea bottles were placed around the open fire; the tea was warm by lunchtime. This was one thing I could not stand, and even today, I don't like tea from a flask.

Next to the school was a butcher's shop owned by Jim Foreman. Then came Miss Patrick's shop; she sold groceries, cigs, and sweets. Some children visited this shop during break times. Sintons was a well-stocked shop selling lots of outdoor clothes, plus wool and a variety of knick-knacks.

The Methodist Chapel was always well attended. The caretaker's cottage was attached, situated on the main street.

At the bottom of the village is a church manse; this is still occupied and is a very impressive building.

Now we come to what we know as the village hall. This had been a church school since before my time. A committee was formed, and we raised enough money to buy the building from the church. Then we had to raise enough money to have it refurnished. This was one of the best halls at the time.

The caretaker's cottage garden ran down to the Main Street.

A row of cottages brought the end of the village. These were later demolished. Lambton Terrace and Kyloe View were built on the ground.

Lambton Avenue was built just before the war.

Walter Piercy's granny and aunt had a small dairy. This was fine until Walter was left on his own, and things got so dirty he wouldn't sell much milk.

His house was next to where Lizzie Mather lives. At that time, Lizzie's house was owned by the Local Nursing Association, and we always had a nurse in the village. Philips Place was built after the war. Previously, it was a collection of old buildings known as Phillips Court. The stone-built house at the entrance was owned by two old gentlemen called Jack and Harry Lyall. They had been Carters, and their horses were kept in the stables behind the school.

Where Alice Carr and Betty Bone live were single-story cottages, later raised to make two flats above. Then we had our second bank, also open two mornings a week.

Now we come to Dryburn Road and North View. North View, where the first pensioners' bungalows were built, and also four two-bedroom houses. Back on the street, the White Swan remains the same over the years.

On the left side of the street was a bakery and shop owned by the Forsyths of Allerdean Grange until it was taken over by Clare Foreman.

The garage that followed was owned by the Robinsons, which was later known as the garage shop and was owned by the Pringles: Ned, Jack, and Mary. They lived in the house adjoining. The shop was very upmarket and had some beautiful outfits. Once a year, they had a sale, and although I didn't see it, I believe people were waiting long before opening time.

Opposite was a sweet shop owned by Miss Armstrong; she also kept kitchen crockery and china tea sets. I still have one given to me by my mother-in-law.

The building had a big fire, and the shop was gone. Miss Armstrong died shortly after.

Yet another shop, plus a bakery, owned by John Mole. Then one more shop selling all sorts of things, plus having a Post Office; this was owned by the Miss Starks, Meg and Winnie.

Back across the street was the War Memorial and a small shop owned by M'Call and Paterson.

The farm cottages have not changed over the years, or the farmhouse.

The Catholic Church had a house adjoining where the Catholic father lived; it also had a hall with a flat above. The Parish Church, St. John the Baptist, has had one or two improvements, and that is where Tommy and I got married over sixty years ago.

Western House, the Vicarage, and the Black Bull brought an end to the village. I almost forgot the Hermitage; we got a lot of nuns staying, especially in the summer.

On the road to Barmoor, a joiner had a workshop at Ham Hall. At Barmoor corner, we had the Plymouth Brethren.

Barmoor Home Farm was occupied by the Reavleys. The Dower House was next to the farm steading, and to the left of that was the gate to the church walk up to the castle.

My first visit to the castle was quite an experience, as I was friendly with the chauffeur's eldest daughter. The Sitwells were in residence; they were a family of three: Bill, Simon, and Ann. They had servants who lived in; they also had a gardener who kept the gardens and greenhouses in wonderful condition. It would appear they were quite well-to-do at the time.

I mustn't forget Northfield, as Connie and I spent a lot of time at Tommy's cousins. Eventually, Tommy and the boys (Colin and Trevor) and I lived at Northfield for over 30 years. Tommy was a gardener; they were very happy years.

When Bev first printed this out for me, I realized that was only the first few years. The war years changed lots of things; young people from the area had to leave for war work. The members of the Territorials were called up straight away, and a lot of the village girls joined the forestry commission, working in Kylvie woods.

The Land Army girls were working on farms, and we had a lot of evacuees from the Newcastle area.

The big houses like Barmoor Castle, The Dower House, and the Manse were occupied by the soldiers. Nissan huts appeared in spare ground and were occupied by the army.

In

this area, we did not have to worry about air raids, but we could hear the German bombers going over to Glasgow.

They had a decided drone. On the return journey, they offloaded two bombs, one at Barmoor South Moor and one near Well Close.

The committee organized to raise money during the war for Salute the Soldier Wings for Victory, then carried on to raise money for the village hall. The old school was bought from the church. Next came raising money to have the building refurbished. It was the best hall in the North at the time; dances were held every week, sometimes twice a week.

The football club organized a festival week. We had army cadets trained by my dad, air cadets, and youth clubs.

A British Legion, a very large Women's Institute, Leek shows, and a yearly industrial and horticultural show. The Bowling Club and Over Sixties Club are the only things still going today.

A group of ladies had a busy time helping out at various functions.

Not a lot has changed over the last few years. Houses have had a facelift, and many bungalows have been built.

The Village Hall has at last received money from the lottery, and we look forward to it being refurbished.

The school has had lots of improvements, and a pensioners' lunch is now served twice a week.

We now have one shop and a mobile Post Office. This is one of the government's big mistakes.

I hope you can follow this. I have had some very happy days in Lowick and now have happy memories.