

I think he was a tea planter India or Ceylon came back to family home in Lowick.

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AS I REMEMBER LOWICK FROM 1919 BY MR ~~HEMP~~ SIMS /

Lowick has been rather careless in the retention of any of its ancient landmarks. Scarcely anything remains apart from memories:-

One of the latest to go was the Penfold wantonly destroyed for road repairs when the South Road was widened and brought up to date after the Second World War. A rough sketch taken from a old painting is enclosed.

This, with its dressed stone coping was possibly the best example in the country. The only other I have seen (on TV) is in Durham, possibly a little larger but more crudely built and with flat rough coping.

At the same time Blackthorn trees were cut down marking the alleged site of the burial place of the victims of the Black Death of 1347/1348 (plague pit). This was a square hedged blocked area directly on the north corner of South Road and road to High Steads, There was a sunken hollow covered with old brambles and surrounded by ancient Blackthorns. The sharp corners of the road were rounded off and at the same time the Blackthorns removed and the hollow filled. More recently the angled hedge was removed and a fence put directly across the square, this fence crosses over the said pit, although hidden by grass a few years ago whilst walking across it seemed that the earth had again sunk a little, possible the new soil filling the hollow. If walking across be careful as the sudden drop is hidden by the ^{at} grass ^{it} could turn an ankle.

The Cottage No.35 Main Street is on the site of the secret meeting place of 'The Coventers'. These were religious people of the North of England and Scotland who refused to accept the Church of England Bishops and methods of worship. They were outlawed by the Government and hunted down and killed by the Army when found meeting in secret valleys or buildings. A date is carved above the door.

Maypole - The last Maypole dance was held in the present childrens playground in 1920 and although Miss Patrick the childrens school teacher taught the 'figures' of the dance for a further year or two it was never ~~repeated.~~ repeated.

School Barring Out Day - This was a day when scholars took over the school and locked the teacher out. This was held for the last time in the early 1920's, it must have been summer time for I remember, the already mentioned Miss Patrick was tut tutting around wearing a light coloured wide brimmed straw hat with a band of bright coloured flowers around it. The two schools, Main School and Church of England school joined about this time and the 'battles' between the two, usually half way between stopped. The Roman Catholic School had closed after the opening of the state school. Having to buy your own books and pay about a penny or twopence per week ended about the turn of the century.

Bastile Corner - This was the site of the old Bastile or Pele Tower, where local people took refuge during a Border Raid. Cattle etc were herded into the lower area and families above. One or two narrow filled-in slits in part of the wall are still be be seen ~~or~~ could have been used as defense positions.

Sitwell War Memorial - This was to date the last chance given to the Village for an unusual public structure. At the end of the First World War, each village, town or hamlet started erecting War Memorials to their local people who had died in what is almost certainly the most ghastly of wars to date, in the sheer horror of the conditions men had to endure.

General Sitwell offered to give the memorial, something which expressed the sheer harshness and toughness which had had to be endured, he erected these harsh Northumbrian rocks in the village, the names to be carved on the rock and the money collected by the Village to be used to build a Village Memorial Hall with assistance from the General if required. However, the majority of the villagers wanted a marble confection like a weeping angel or warrior and sword or such like. The General's offers was rejected and he was requested to remove his rocks. These now stand at Barmoor.

A similar idea was used in the erection of a memorial in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh to the Norwegian Brigade for their service in World War Two, it is a mere simple monument compared to the harsh grandeur of the Sitwell Memorial.

Lowick Hirings - The hiring of farm labour took place in March, a most degrading custom where the farm workers had to stand like cattle, rain or shine, whilst the farmers walked around and chose the people they fancied. I do not know what happened to those not chosen and had to get out of the tied houses they were living in.

However, it had its cheerful side, the village Common was crowded with shows, roundabouts, swing-boats, coconut shies, bargain salesmen etc. At times the number overflowed to the area around the War Memorial and space in front of the White Swan.

Less welcome visitors to the Common were the annual summer visitation of Gypsies with the old fashioned horse drawn caravans.

The Flittings - On the 13th May came the 'flittings' when those who had not been hired on to stay at their present farm had to move out to their new work place. Farm carts were supplied and all their belongings including the pig had to be piled on and make the slow journey to their new destination. If they were lucky it was a fine day but sometime it poured with rain, and tarpaulins were not always available, I gather there were many damp beds that night.

I remember clearly one instance, it was a pouring wet day and three carts came through the Village piled high with furniture. On the last of the three carts, right on top, had been lashed a large rocking chair, on it sat an elderly lady in an old hat and coat carrying a baby, behind her a large pig squealed in a crate. It was, I suppose, amusing, but she sat there, head held high, rain streaming from her hat and coat staring straight ahead in complete dignity as though she were the Queen of Sheba approaching the court of king Soloman on a chair of State. I was young but she impressed me strongly so that I can still see her today almost seventy years later.

About then I also remember two old ladies describing how in their parents day they were often supplied with ^{little} else than four walls and a roof (I suppose pre-1850's). They had to carry their own 'firebricks', window frames (hoping they would fit) and often canvas to place across the roof beams to act as a sort of ceiling.

Roman Road - (Devils Causeway) - The old Roman Road passed through the Village. At one time it was thought it passed along the present cross-road by the White Swan, but it is understood recent aerial photographs locate it crossing by the War Memorial and about the old crofts and present new cottage in Church Lane. *In the 1920's certain artifacts were dug up in the crofts but little interest was then shown and they have been lost.* It is rumoured that Church Lane was once the ancient Main Street, continuing across the fields at the bottom and re-joining the present road. I don't know, but the wide vee top and the fact it was paved for double traffic suggests it was of more importance than today. I have been told by old farm workers of old tiles and remains of one time cottages being unearthed in the said fields, perhaps the lime workings effected its demise as they came right up to the road, ~~Now~~ filled and levelled, only the long gap in the hedge indicates the spot. The filling of the Dryburn workings have concealed some of the most amazing rock formation, layer upon layer of differing rock from dark brown to pale grey bent and twisted in close tight waves and ripples.

Population - I may be incorrect but I think in the 1920's there were about 560 people living in the Village. There were about eleven shops including a saddler and a blacksmith. With little transport to Berwick the Village was crowded with people on Saturdays from outlying farms and it was difficult to get served at any store.

I think the first public transport was started by a Mr Hector Foreman, I cannot remember how often it ran, possibly only on a Saturday, or what the vehicle was like, but the seats were hard, you got down from steps placed at the back and the driver had a brush to brush the dust from you if necessary. I don't suppose you travelled if it was wet. Then came the open charabangs with a moveable canvas roof and sides if it rained, then the type in use at present.

Water Supply - The water supply was poor and practically everyone had to use 'stand pipes' and carry their water in pails. It was very hard ^{work} and tiring ^{work}. Each summer the supply almost failed and people at the top of the Village had occasionally to carry from the lower taps at the bottom. There were private wells but because of rock from about the White Swan up, these were only available in the lower half of the Village.

Most, if not all houses had 'dry closets' and open ash pits. The two butchers dumped their offal outside and ^{if} never cleared away, there were strong smells and many flies.

The stream at the Black Bull was blocked to form a pool where carts were washed. At that time a boy of six or seven could walk up the tunnel from one end to the other.

Doctor - Dr. Elliott was the resident doctor living where Sinton's shop now stands. A heavy built middle aged man who took a cold bath each morning summer and winter. At this time facilities for baths were not common. I think he was a good family doctor but lacking modern facilities.

No anaesthetic - if you had toothache he had a heavy wooden armchair in which you sat, he put his knee on your chest, one hand on your forehead and pulled it out. At least you weren't sick afterwards as many of the old anesthetics often made you. As a small boy I tore my upper lip on barbed wire, Dr. Elliott stitched it back while my Father held my body and my Mother my head, and he made a darned good job of it.

Still he had modern ideas and rigged up, or had rigged up, an 'electric machine' that gave 'shock' to the elderly for rheumatism or arthrites. Many scoffed at those that believe in it, yet in recent years I have experienced a more modern version successfully used.

Churches and Pubs - In the 1920's there were still five churches in the Village. The Roman Catholic would be the smallest, the English Presbyterian had been the largest but after World War One only its Hall, (now a garage) was used. The Scottish Presbyterian and the Methodist were also large, now reduced. There was also the Brethren at Barmoor in what had been built for the Village Reading Room. The early Scottish Presbyterians had also been at Barmoor up nearer to the Castle but by the 1920's was a ruin used as farm^{building} I say Scottish Presbyterian because I think about this time andⁿ old baptism font was returned to the Scottish Church from the Castle.

The large English Presbyterian Church was pulled down in the late 1920's as it was reckoned the walls were rotten. It was sold for £5.00 as rubble, the purchaser to pull it down and clear the site. Far from being rotten the walls were so difficult to destroy that explosives were resorted to, this was not a success as it only resulted in a smallish hole and all the roofs around being damaged by flying stones. The Village was most amused.

The once five pubs had been reduced to three - The Commercial by the Common, The White Swan and The Black Bull. Until World War Two women never used them and youths under twenty one were considered well on their way to hell if seen there.

Amusement - these were few, For the men there were the pubs when they could afford it, or standing at the street corners. I expect a great many had their handicrafts. The children roamed around, getting into mischief but never vindictive.

The women met and talked or sewed or made rugs or the things women do. There was more home entertaining, usually for Supper with meats and general spread.

After marriage women were expected to wear dull clothes and not to be 'flighty' or go to too many public entertainments.

There was a weekly dance every Saturday night in the Drill Hall (now a mere shell by the Common) these lasted until World War Two. There was no radio or television.

Each of the three non-conformist churches held annual 'sorree' these consisted of a 'bun fight' followed by a concert of local talent. The 'bun fights' usually became just that especially if held in the now closed Church of England School. The younger element first filling themselves with cakes, buns and tea then grabbing more and throwing them at each other.

It was tried to cut the supply down by giving to each a paper bag with a limited supply, but this did little good, the 'fights' continued.

The concerts which followed were however well ordered and enjoyed. The performers were local and untrained but often good. The desire for music, poetry and singing was such that people would walk or cycle miles to attend and if it was known a particular performer was part of the programme, he or she was good for an increased crowd. The charge was one shilling for an adult, and sixpence for children.

Lowick Hall Farm gave a 'After Harvest Feast' and dance for workers and friends in the granary, now part of Garden House.

There must have been a yearly trip to the seaside at Spittal for I remember meeting at the Scottish Presbyterian Church, climbing into the long horse-drawn carts and heading for Spittal. A frame had been built over the cart and worn straw ropes wound around the sides for the women and adults to sit on, whilst piles of straw laid in the cart for us children and young people to sit or lie on. It was one of those rare beautiful summer mornings the journey was slow but most enjoyable with singing, mouth-organs and a concertina supplying the music. The older children tiring of sitting in the cart ran, sang and danced along the side of the road.

I don't remember much of Spittal except that the Spa fountain was still running from a sort of cliffside along a street, it looked a rather rusty yellowish colour and rather unpleasant. The Shovel Forge with its fires and hot metal was the most attractive. I don't actually remember the sea at all. About 3 p.m. it started to rain and became a steady downpour, most had come prepared but some trusting the beautiful morning, hadn't. We began our slow unprotected return, any attempts at singing etc soon died and it became a state of enduring, it was a wet but not too miserable a party which returned. It may have been the last such trip for I never remember another.

Sunday Evenings - On a fine Sunday evening during the summer after the evening services practically all the able bodied people from age to youth took a walk up the road as far as Barmoor and back. There was practically no road traffic and people met and gossiped and talked to friends they hadn't seen all week, while a firm eye was kept on the possible pairing of the younger section. The road from the bottom of the Village to Barmoor often became quite crowded. There was no television sets and few radios to keep people indoors.

Tramps - People were poor: There were many 'tramps' as they were known who came begging for a penny or food. Occasionally their children would come to the door and sing for a penny or a half-penny. It was rumoured they had a secret code left outside a house especially generous, I don't know the truth of this.

Here we had a Jackie Murray who lived in a stone hut down in a field with a piece of sacking for a door, a pile of straw in a corner for a bed and a large three legged pot (yettling) over a fire in another corner. I once looked in, the fire was lit, the pot was bubbling and a complete sheeps head and semi skinned rabbit were skimming around.

Up the 'Back Road', now Church Lane lived Mary Ann Jobson. A round bundle of old clothes, battered hat with a round merry face, none too clean, peeping out. She lived under a thorn tree with various water-proofs hanging around and overhead to keep out normal weather and during really bad weather she would come and 'borrow' a penny for the 'lodging house', then a derelict outhouse behind the Black Bull. She got her water from an old water barrel, food I don't know. In winter she disappeared only to return next Spring.

Jackie stayed out all year, somehow he got drunk most Saturday nights and many times had to be helped over the several wire fences on his way 'home', his language was always 'choice'.

He had had an elder brother Jimmy who in his day had raced the coaches from Wooler for pennies. I never say him.