

Memories of Lunedale

By Jack Whitfield

**(with additional information from Harry
Lowson and Trevor Dent)**

Thomas Raine, whose family lived at Grove Farm, Bowbank, was my grandfather.

The family moved across the valley from West Pasture to Bowbank following the building of the Grasshlome Reservoir, to which they lost a considerable amount of farmland.

My mother, Winifred, and Harry's mother, her elder sister, Betty, were school children at the time. Trevor's mother, their younger sister, Alice, was probably born at Bowbank.

Farming then, as today was a financial struggle and other means of raising revenue had to be found. Grove Farm house had a cottage attached and this was let to holidaymakers. Charles Buchan of Sunderland football club fame and his family were frequent visitors.

I remember during the Second World War, two families from the Sunderland/West Boldon area, taking it in turns to live there when life was dangerous in the towns. The wives and children lived at Bowbank for long periods and enjoyed helping on the farm and in the hayfield.

For generations, our family had been very musical, there being a history of violinists and brass band players and my grandfather was the most talented of them all, being a fine violinist and a gold medal cornet player. He ran a dance band with other people and members of his family. My mother and Auntie Betty were recruited when they were old enough, as was their cousin Alec Anderson, who was a fine cornet player, Auntie Betty on the piano and Mam on the drums. They were eventually disbanded when the girls married. Auntie Alice was also a fine violinist but too young to play at dances. Innovative dances at the time, like the Black Bottom, were very popular with the girls but not so with Grandfather. Dances often went on until early morning. Baldersdale was a particularly notorious venue with dances lasting until daylight.

Grandfather also bred and showed smooth haired fox terriers. So there was life outside farming.

The twenties was probably a bit like the sixties. My mother and aunts had their hair bobbed when they were twenty or so to attend Annie Jackson's twenty first birthday party at Chapel House, Laithkirk. Old type black dresses were out. Ladies and girls played tennis. They had a rough tennis court at Grove Farm, but Jack Brown, Strathmore's agent next door, had a proper court where they could play. That court was still there in the 1960s.

Motorbikes were the rage for young people and Mother said they all went too fast. There were many accidents, roads were narrower then and surfaces lumpy. Mother's friend and boyfriend from Mickleton set off on holiday and were killed at the crossroads just beyond Ingleton. Mother's cousin was badly injured and was lame for the rest of her life. My father and mother went down Laithkirk bank too fast, couldn't turn at the bottom and skidded straight through the gate into what was Hind's field, luckily sustaining only cuts and bruises. A lady from Middleton, who had been visiting East Park Farm, was run over and killed on the road between Bowbank and Laithkirk. Compared with our youth, these were wild times indeed! Roads could be dangerous places even without the combustion engine. Mother's cousin was killed at Tunnel Top corner riding her bicycle, taking lunch to her father, Grandad's brother, who was working at the railway sidings at Lonton. She ran into the shaft of a cart coming in the opposite direction. Life then was speeding up but at a cost.

Lives were also taken by Tuberculosis. Mother's best friend's sisters, who lived at High Side Farm, Bowbank, both died of the disease.

Memories of Bowbank

My best friend, Malcolm Walker was an evacuee at Chapel House, living with Basil and Annie Teward for the duration of the war. He was from Middlesbrough.

I remember learning to milk cows by hand. Milk selling had started after the war which gave farmers some security. Eventually, milking machines were installed. The churns of milk were cooled in the trough until a proper cooler house was built.

Boy scouts from Sunderland held their summer camp down the lane at Bowbank near the river. They had a parents' day when the lane was packed with cars of all makes and sizes.

Another talented family, the Browns, lived at Bowbank when I was young. The daughters were very good singers and sang on the BBC radio during the war. Their brother also broadcast, giving humorous talks about farming life. They were good artists.

Like everywhere else, the war effected Bowbank. The quarry ground at Laithkirk was a practice area for Bren gun carriers. They entered the area from the lane at Bowbank, churning it into a quagmire; but it was exciting for young boys.

An air raid shelter was dug into the hillside at Bowbank by the Estate workers. Its only use was when the war first started. My grandad and Jack Brown sat in it to fire-watch; they did this for about a week and didn't bother after that. The army laid a telephone wire all the way up Lunedale. We're not sure why.

Kathleen Brown became a landgirl and became a landgirl and Jenny Brown (not related) became a Wren.

I can remember a horse-drawn snowplough being used in the 1947 storm. Grandad said that when the farm opposite was a pub, the snowplough rarely got any further up the dale as while the horses were rested, the ale proved too popular with the men.

I remember the wagon taking the workers to and from Lunehead mine. It ran into one of our grandfather's cows one day and killed it.

My Aunty Alice and her husband Bob Dent lived in a tin bungalow in the grounds of Wemmergill Hall where he was a caretaker when the Hall was occupied by a Catholic School during the war. The school was run by nuns.

Bowbank Show and Sports, 1912

On Saturday. 15th September, the second annual Bowbank Show and sports took place in a field adjoining the Pool House Inn. Last year on its inauguration in the remote part of Lunedale, the success of the event exceeded all expectations.

Unfortunately, on the present occasion, owing to the phenominally late hay harvest occasioned by the wet and cold summer, the exhibition was not so numerously attended as it otherwise would have been. The day was fine, and consequently farmers took the opportunity of gathering in the crops long and sadly overdue, and which materially affected the gate. The exhibits, although not numerous, were of good quality, and highly creditable to the locality. The show-ground is situated in the midst of rugged and romantic scenery, and commands a fine view of extensive woodland and moorlands, while close by are the Grassholme waterworks. During the afternoon sports of various descriptions took place, and some fairly good racing was witnessed. The Mickleton Brass Band, under the conductorship of Mr W Raine, was in attendance, and played a fine programme of music. Luncheon was provided in a Marquee. There were no intoxicants on the ground. Ladies only waited on at the tables, laden with ham, beef, tongue, fruit pies and sweet-cakes.

Colin Staley

East Park

Kirk Carrion, or Kirk Arran, as my grandfather calls it, is at the top of the photograph. If your eye comes down and to the right, you will see part of a roof in a hollow in the land. That is East Park.

My family bought East Park, Lunedale, in October 1961. Before Mr Isaac Tarn and sons bought it, Mr Bob Raine lived there with his family Mr Raine's sister is Mrs Edie Scott, of The Grove, Bowbank, and he was uncle to her sons Thomas and John Scott. Mr Raine's family of two sons and a daughter emigrated to Australia.

The late Mr John Walton and his brother, William, and their parents moved to East Park in 1928, when John Walton was 14. He walked his livestock from Stainmore in Westmorland, where they had been living, to East Park. He later moved to Crossthwaite, in Holwick, but he always thought of East Park as a lovely place to live.

No-one lives there now but we keep sheep and suckler cows there and a quad bike makes getting round it easier as it has very steep hills.

Ruth Tarn, Aged 13, May 2006

issue of where we will spend eternity.