

Memoirs of Ann Forsyth (nee Clarkson) who lived at North View, Keld from 1948 - 1967

As to the garden, all those years ago anything could be thrown in the garden, what would burn was put on the fire, when the bin men came the bin held mostly ashes from the fire. I even have a vague memory of throwing tin cans, etc over the deep drop behind Rukin's farm. Dad grew strawberries and I think potatoes and a few cabbages, he enjoyed it. Also in the garden were raspberry, blackcurrant and gooseberry bushes, I remember having to pick them for mother to bake into pies, etc.

Births - My brother, Clifford, George and Margaret Clarkson's son, was born in March 1937 so he wasn't born at Keld but the rest of us were. Nora was born March 1939, Jean (who was married to Keith Brogden who had the quarry after dad until he died suddenly in 2009) was born March 1947 and myself born Oct 1948. Deaths- My mother's mother was being looked after at North View when she died in 1976. Dad (George Clarkson) died at North View in December 1983.

When I was growing up at Keld there was a shop at Butt House (and post office), although I remember the post office at the Youth Hostel run by Mr and Mrs Reynolds, it then moved to Catrake Cottages (also known as gamekeepers cottages) just along from the old Methodist Chapel. It was run by Irene Calvert who then moved to Birk Hill, and she had a little shop as well, it was the first time we could buy frozen fish fingers and ice cream in Keld!

Winters were very severe then, we got lots of snow, it used to blow in under the roof slates and dad used to have to go in the attic with a bucket and shovel to bring the snow down, otherwise if it was left to melt it used to bring the ceiling down! Of course with no central heating when we woke in the morning we couldn't see out, the windows had a thick layer of frost-very pretty fern like patterns, but it was so cold getting up and dressed. The snow used to be so deep up past the village hall and when a path had been dug out we used to make little 'houses' at the side. Up Butt House lane the snow could be higher than the walls at either side.

Together with John Rukin, Dorothy, my sister and myself had a big sledge and used to go in the field behind North View and all get on at once, it wasn't very often we were all still on when we got to the bottom of the hill.

The building facing as you walk up to North View was the wash house; all the water had to be carried from the house and the washing done by hand, then pegged out in the field next to the house. I remember once climbing onto the gate to the field and onto the roof of the wash house to find I couldn't get back down! I was shouting for a long time before anybody heard and when rescued told never to go up there again. We kept hens in the field and each Christmas one of the cockerels would be killed for Christmas Day, we thought it was marvellous as in those days we never hardly had chicken to eat; it was mostly mutton, pork and sometimes beef.

Even when dad had stopped working there was so much 'junk' everywhere, the stable (which is now part of the kitchen at North View) was full. The 'Smiddy' (as we called it)

down the lane (now a house called The Smithy) was also full of Dad's things, (I have a photo of it before it became a house) also he had his 'joiners shop' at Thwaite full of stuff. We must at some time have got it all cleared out. He was never the same once he couldn't work, he lived for his work and for playing in Muker Silver Band.

I went to the little school in Keld from age 5-15; at that time the schools were just becoming comprehensive and it wasn't compulsory to go to secondary school. Those younger than me went but I remember there was only myself and William Whitehead left at Keld till we were fifteen. So it was a very basic education. However when leaving school I worked at Kirkby Stephen in an accountant's office for 2 years then married and left Keld to live at first Low Row, then Reeth.

The village men who would go off for the day mending walls, etc would have a very basic bait box-bread and cheese most likely, maybe a piece of fruit pie as well. In the evening they would meet in the Reading Room (bottom room of village hall) where there would be daily newspapers to read and some would play cards or dominoes. Before it closed they would go to the Cat Hole Inn (now Hope House) near Butt Rigg,

Christmas was fairly quiet, we did have a small real tree each year but got very little in the way of presents. We used to hang up a long stocking of dads at the end of our bed and next morning there would be an orange, bar of chocolate, a few nuts and a small present - we thought we had got so much. There would be a service at the bottom chapel on Christmas night then a few days after Christmas a children's party in the village hall: sandwiches, cakes, etc followed by games, then 'Santa' would arrive with a small present for each child, a highlight of the year. Everybody got the same and then we knew no different, not like today.

We used to go to Sunday school at the 'top chapel' and in June there would be the anniversary when we would all have to learn a recitation to recite in front of all. A few weeks later we went on the Sunday school outing to usually Morecambe or Redcar, but the coaches weren't that good then. On the way back after leaving Hawes we had to get out and walk up the steep hill as the bus would not have made the climb otherwise. You never bought food whilst at Morecambe; sandwiches were packed, usually egg, and eating them on the beach they invariably ended up tasting of sand!

Each November there was a gift sale in the village hall with different stalls, jumble, books, preserves, etc. The two chapels and the hall took turns so each had an opportunity every three years to raise funds. Mother used to be caretaker for the village hall and kept it spotless, scrubbing a lot of the floor on her hands and knees. Every Saturday I used to clean the brass knobs on the doors as well as the snek (door latch) on North View!

As for cars, not many people in the village had them. Dad usually had an old van or pick up for his work, people didn't go out much then to places. If we did go to visit, say my grandma, we all had to squeeze in - what a squash. We never left Keld much, maybe Richmond or Darlington once a year if we needed anything.

Muker show of course was a highlight of the year, of course much smaller than it is now. We did have plenty of travelling salesmen. Monday we had a fruit and veg waggon, two days each week a butchers van came to Keld and there was also a weekly grocers vans. Clothes while we were young were ordered from catalogues and of course handed down from child to child, so with me the youngest I got all the tatty stuff! But as we got older we used to make all our dresses, etc. We would buy the material from Hawes and we had an old sewing machine that did quite well.

Two different coal men came round, ours I think came all the way from Coundon near Bishop Auckland, later Peacocks from Bainbridge started coming and the others stopped then.

Regarding electric, I do remember not having electric, we thought nothing about it, we had a big lamp on the table in the living room and it was candles if you went to anywhere else in the house. Dad installed mains electric in the house but I doubt it would pass safety standards today. There used to be a socket in the beams of the ceiling (probably near the light socket) mother used to climb up and kneel on the table to plug the iron into it and do the ironing on the table; no ironing board needed! Of course before electric we had flat irons which were put in the fire to heat. Dad also put electric in other houses, I remember going with him to a house in Arkengarthdale. I often went with him to the joiners shop in Thwaite, he would give me a piece of wood and a tiny plane, which I still have, and I would pretend to be a carpenter.

Barclays Bank used to come to the Institute every Wednesday, John Rukin's grandma was caretaker and every Wednesday she could be seen carrying a fire shovel with live fire up to the Institute to set off a fire there so it was warm for people visiting 'the bank'.

As for crime, well we had regular visits from the nearest policeman from Gunnerside, we were in awe of him, the worst things that would happen would be around bonfire night when the local lads would maybe take a few garden gates off and hide them nearby, also they had a habit of lighting fireworks- bangers and jumping jacks and throwing them where they shouldn't. I remember gathering branches for weeks before November 5th for the fire but can't remember exactly where we held it; probably on the road side. Of course there was no health and safety awareness then, but I don't remember anybody getting hurt.

As for tourists, well plenty of hikers would stay at the youth hostel and I think John Rukin's mother did B & B; she certainly provided afternoon teas, so there were a significant amount of people passing through the village, although not as many as today. The Pennine Way then came into being and that brought many more walkers.

Ann Forsyth (nee Clarkson)

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