

Mr P.S. Harrison of Scarborough Road, Lytham St Annes, has kindly provided the following reminiscence of his father Thomas Stuart Harrison who was born in "Inglewood" in 1896.

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LIFE AT ALDCLIFFE

[My elder brother][James]^a Allen was born in May 1893, [and] I was born on the 24th of November 1896 at "Inglewood", Aldcliffe, near Lancaster.

Dad [Richard Harrison] was the land Agent for Mr. E.B. Dawson, of Aldcliffe Hall, Aldcliffe, and "Inglewood"¹ was built for the Agent, I think in 1890. Aldcliffe was then in the County District and was not included in the now City Boundary until sometime about the 1950s, but even then building of new property was not done until Aldcliffe hall was sold about the end of the 1939 war. The Squire died during the 1914-1918 war and his eldest daughter lived there till she died.

Then the Hall and grounds were sold to Barton Townley of Barton Motors fame, who had the Hall demolished and he started to build bungalows at each side of the carriage drive.² The dwellings very soon were in great demand and all available sites were spoken for, but when the site of the Hall was built on, I do not know, 1972?.

To go back to pre 1914, motor cars were not in general use, and at the Hall there was the Coachman with horses and carriage, sometimes a pair of horses, in fact nearly every day the Brougham was used with 2 horses they employed a groom as assistant to the Coachman. His duties would be to wash the carriage after each journey, groom the horses and of course clean the harness, single or double and polish after each journey. So one can imagine how well the horses and carriage looked at each turn out.

The Squire was Chairman of the County Court, held each Saturday at the Castle and was well known for his severe dealing with anybody charged with being under the influence of drink. Mr. E.Barton and Mr. W.Garnett of Quernmore dealt severely with any speeding done by motorists, or poaching.

Mr. Dawson had two sisters both maiden ladies, they lived at a very nice house called Walnut Bank at Stodday. For transport they used one horse and either the Brougham or Victoria carriages. In fact some days they would walk to Lancaster and sometimes back again, it was well over two miles of country lanes and they did not mind walking back in the dark.

On Sundays the Squire was a great supporter of the Congregational Church, he would go to Church by carriage and take with him lunch ready cooked and placed in a well padded box something like a hay box. He would have his lunch at the Church Vestry and perhaps walk home at night, the box to be collected by the Coachman when he took the Squire to Town as he did each morning where he had Chambers in Market Street, Lancaster. By profession he was a Barrister, but I never knew him to be representing anybody in Court.

^a In the strange way of young boys, these two brothers were always known by their second names, James *Allen* Harrison and Thomas *Stuart* Harrison – these second names were not Christian names but family surnames. Even stranger, the two brothers always called each other *Joe*.

¹ [A pioneering building, constructed of poured concrete. *NW*]

² [In fact, Barton Townley simply sold off plots of land to private buyers who then built their own properties. *NW*]

Dad was the land Agent for the Aldcliffe Estates, and the village of Warton, near Carnforth. He worked from home at Inglewood, Aldcliffe. There were seven farms on the Aldcliffe Estate and they all lotted milk into Lancaster. Morning delivery was always before breakfast and a delivery was also made sometime about 5.p.m. We would hear them returning about 7-30p.m.to 8-30p.m. When they got home all the kits had to be washed and cleaned ready for the next morning delivery, this was done by the women folk on the farm. The kits varied in size from ten gallon, down to the smaller ones used for delivering the milk. The Home farm provided milk for the Hall. We milked out six cows including one Jersey which of course enriched the milk from the other cows. The House Keeper always made butter for the house and eggs were from the farm, as were the chickens kept for the table, also for gifts at Xmas to friends of the Squire and his family who lived in the district, also included were ducks.

The kitchen garden was extensive and we were able to grow sufficient to supply the Hall with veg, from Asparagus to Cabbage, etc., not to mention Grapes in the Vinery. I served a number of years in the garden and also on the Estate, doing such work as getting gravel from our own gravel pit, felling trees in the winter and sometimes doing some field draining which created a diversion from the ordinary run of estate work.

Every year as winter approached, four or five of the men who worked in the gardens, including myself, would rake up all the leaves with wooden hand rakes in the whole of the grounds, we stacked them in great heaps at various points in the grounds, when a horse and cart would collect and cart them into one of the fields abutting on the boundary wall which surrounded the grounds. Here the leaves would stay stacked for twelve months, when the whole heap end to end was turned back and slaked lime was mixed in with the leaves to help them to rot down. At the end of two years it was like black crumbly compost which was used for potting soil for the greenhouse plants, the surplus, which was always plenty, was wheeled on to the Shrubbery after which it was forked in and it proved an excellent dressing for the type of shrubs which were grown there, much to the shrubs benefit.

At various times of the year I used to help the Estate men in felling trees, and getting gravel from the gravel pits which were situated on land adjoining the Lancaster Canal, being the earth that had been extracted years before, for the passing of the Lancaster Canal. There were some very good deposits of gravel in this area. All the garden paths were made from gravel from Carnforth district which proved very good after being well laid and rolled, it set very hard and was very durable. We also had a sand pit at one part of the Aldcliffe Estate which provided some very sharp sand used for building purposes and of course some soft sand which also had its uses on the Estate.

We could get all the limestone rockery stones from Warton Crag, it was well weathered and carried just the right amount of moss, that made is very useful for laying our rockeries, as it did not look as if it had just been quarried and gave a finished appearance as soon as it was laid. It was handy having the Warton Crag to draw from, one did not have to wait for the limestone to get weathered before giving a well finished appearance to the job in hand. With a garden as large as the Hall gardens, the landscapes looked very good as it blended with the surrounding grounds.³

Felling trees in winter in the woods was very interesting work and a firm called Graveson of Warton, near Carnforth, always did the moving of the trees from the woods to the various saw mills that took the timber, mainly the one at Carnforth where they still function under the same name. We always kept some of the timber for use on the Estate, and this was well seasoned before being used in the Estate joiners shop for such jobs as field gates, etc..

³ [Much of this rockery was bought by new residents and are now a feature in many gardens on Aldcliffe Hall drive. NW]

Electricity for lighting sources at the Hall was made by a dynamo run by an oil engine at the joiners shop. The power generated was stored in huge batteries in the cellars of the Hall, and supplied the Hall and stables with electric power and light.

A novel happening on the Estate is that the Coachman and Head Gardener were both lay Preachers at the Sunday School held on the Estate, they also had some help from one or two Head Gardeners from various large residences in the district who were also lay Preachers. I think by now the building used for Chapel Services must be used for some other purpose, if used at all.⁴

We had a stone quarry in the village, which was out of use for stone, but used as an extra kitchen garden for the Hall. It is on record that some of the stone from this quarry was used in building Lancaster Castle, the ground excavated to get at the rock gave some very good crops of vegetables and was a good asset to the gardens at the Hall.

At the beginning of December of each year we used to start pruning the shrubs, the portions cut off were very useful for Xmas Decorations.

There was a private Cemetery in the ground of the Hall, for family burials only, and as far as I am aware it is still intact. I can remember one of my last jobs at the gardens was to help to line the grave of the Squire with evergreens and Arum Lilies, the funeral Service was conducted by the Resident Minister at the Congregational Church at Lancaster where the Squire and his family worshiped, he was assisted by the late Cannon Bardsley, who was the Vicar of Lancaster at the Parish Church, who incidently was the father of the present Bishop of Coventry. Mr. Bardsley, who when he was only a small boy used to visit the Squires daughter and family at "Inverlune" and I gave him his first decent run on a toboggan. When there was a decent fall of snow we had one or two fields situated on a fairly steep slope which provided an excellent sledge run. Especially as at the bottom of the hill there was the road going to the Home Farm and this had to be crossed, which meant quite a leap of the width of the road, and caused many spills and peals of laughter.

When the frost was severe, the reservoirs used to make quite a good skating rink⁵. I was more keen on going down the snow slopes than skating. Allen used to like the skating better and there were often two parties making merry, one skating and one sledging. It all seems a very long time ago, but some of the happenings still come fresh to one's mind.

I remember one year we made a mushroom bed in the potting shed at the Hall and the result was nil, not a sign of any mushrooms, so after a while the bed was dug out and wheeled in wheelbarrows and tipped at the end of the leaf mould heap mentioned earlier. A short while later mushrooms started to appear by the pound. It just shows that mushrooms are a fickle crop to grow at times. Of course the Spawn was not as that used today (1972), the Botanical and Horticultural brains of today are far ahead of what was taking place then.

I forgot to mention that the drive to the Hall was planted on each side with Cedar Trees interspaced with lime and Chestnut trees, these Cedar trees must be very good specimens by now.⁶

A Spring of very good water was situated not far from the Hall and was piped to the Hall for drinking and kitchen use. I often wonder if it is still in being, or has been replaced by the

⁴ [In 1960 this oblong building with it's white internal walls embellished by religious script, nestling in the old wood in what is now Craiglands court, was an empty shell smelling of a mixture of rotting apples and dry rot. NW]

⁵ [The reservoirs were situated where 'Ashlar House' now stands.]

⁶ [Only three remain now - 2007. One, in my garden, leans at quite an alarming angle but still manages to withstand Aldcliffe's ferocious winter gales. NW]

Towns supply? The water that was used for washing and other uses other than that being used for domestic work, came from the reservoir which was replenished every week by the Oil Engine down at the joiners shop. The drinking water was rain water collected in a concrete cistern and had to go through a filter before use. This method was changed when the Squires daughter occupied the house "Inverlune", which was built for her on her marriage, when the Lancaster water supply was brought to the village.

If you walk on the drive through the Hamlet, there is not a lot of change to see, I do not think the Lancaster Corporation Bus Service has extended as far as Aldcliffe, in fact it would not be anywhere near paying its way, there would not be enough passengers to warrant a Service, and the village and the hamlet of Stoddy is not much larger in population, so I presume these two quiet Hamlets are very much the same as they were many years ago.

I used to look forward to the seven year occasion when the old Custom of Boundary Riding took place, this was a very old Custom of the Mayor and a number of Corporation Officials going round the Town's Boundary, a lot of them on horseback. They would come along the footpath that bounded the Town and Aldcliffe Estate, it extended from a house called "Edenbreck", situated not far from the Castle Station, in Lancaster and came out at the Front lodge, near the Canal. This path was and I presume still is known as the Kendal footpath. When the procession arrived at the Front Lodge they took to the towpath along the Canal side to Deep Cutting Bridge, from here they would wend their way round Scotforth and the East side of the Town. When the University was mooted and then built, the Town boundary was extended to include the land taken over by the Authorities, and mainly on the south side of the Town, which has I presume increased the value of the property situated in this part of the Borough or City of Lancaster, which was created between the wars. I cannot remember the date of this taking place.

Before the First War, the Authorities recreated the title of Constable of Lancaster, this honour had been dormant for a large number of years, and Mr. Dawson was chosen as the new Constable. This was a great honour and at the installation there was quite a pageant. Mr. Dawson had two of the Estate men dressed as Guardians of that period, they were J. Carradus and H. Lambert. For the ceremony a large key belonging to the front Main door of the Castle was produced, it was red rusty and would not function, so dad gave Allen and myself the job of cleaning it, so we soaked it in paraffin for many days to loosen the rust and with hard work and perseverance, we managed to get it looking brighter and it worked the lock. So all was now calm and, thank goodness, as the New Constable was to enter by the Main Door of the Castle, all was well. After the occasion, the garments worn by Carradus and Lambert were dressed on to two wax figures that stood in the entrance hall at Aldcliffe Hall. They looked quite imposing with their Javlines [sic] in their hands.

Many incidents happened on the Estate, but I cannot remember them all, but at the time they caused quite an interest. We had some very large trees in the grounds and at times in a severe gale, one might get blown down, This would be cut off slightly above the roots at ground level and the roots and soil were lowered into the ground again, and in nine cases out of ten the stump took root again, and sent up quite a lot of young shoots, When the root had settled again and showed good signs of life, the new shoots were trimmed out and there one allowed to develop, later trimmed out again and the best and strongest allowed to develop. It was surprising how well they progress in later years and there would be hardly any indication that the tree had blown down. The timber cut off at the time of falling was seasoned in the Estate yard and used for various jobs. The supply of timber was self supporting, except that at times we had to purchase fencing posts mainly of larch or such similar timber, these would be coated in Creasote [sic] to preserve them.

On an estate the size of Aldcliffe and Warton it is surprising what materials are available for a variety [sic] of jobs, such as lime stone from Warton Crag for rockeries. It was quite a journey

from Aldcliffe to Warton and back for the Horseman to take the horse and cart for a load. We had a non stop supply of Hazel Pea Sticks from the same source, they were very useful in a garden the size of Aldcliffe Hall. They were used for Sweet Peas, Culinary Peas, Runner Beans, etc, not forgetting the Tropilonium, which gave a very good show if in a well placed position, they looked very effective and responded to care and attention. We also had cart loads of grass turves from Warton Crag. These turves were more or less virgin and had not in the memory of man been cultivated, the soil was a very light colour of brown and when stacked at Aldcliffe, grass side down for two years, it would cut down into very nice compost with plenty of fibre in it. It was used for Tomatoes and potting soil for Chrysanthus, and the rest of the indoor plants. It gave a wonderful result so we were very fortunate in having such a good cheap supply of both soil, pea sticks and rockery.

I used to see the funny side of the following. We would get one or two loads of spent Hops from one of the Breweries in Lancaster for the growing of orchids, for which it proved very successful. You see the Squire was so keen on temperance causes little did he know that his favourite orchids were grown on Spent Hops. Of course spent hops are a useful manure for any kind of plant.

One fruit tree I well remember is a Morello Cherry, which was grown on a wall facing North, and never had any sun shine, it produced a very good crop each year, this Cherry is for cooking only and it makes good jam.

Thomas Stuuart Harrison 1977

(Philip Stuart Harrison 7-1998)

[I have taken the liberty of adding one or two footnotes and small additions, in square brackets, where I felt it necessary for clarification. *Nicholas Webster- May 2007.*]

My thanks go to Mr Philip. S. Harrison of Scarborough Rd, Lytham St Annes for also generously contributing his father's recollection of local Land Agents(File(H), and two wonderful old photographic postcards of his forbears and his old family home 'Inglewood'(File F).