

Staveley & District History Society

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The views expressed in articles in this Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Society.

Cover photo: Taking on water by the A591 in Ings on Saturday 13th November 2021. Three traction engines hauling a steam engine weighing fifty tonnes on their 50 mile journey from Threlkeld Mining Museum to Bouth to the workshop of Alex Sharphouse, fundraising for Cystic Fibrosis.
(Photo credit - Henry Buxton)

The next issue of the *Journal* (No 54, the Spring 2022 issue) will be published about the 12th April 2021. All contributions (letters, articles, etc.) are welcome at any time but should be with the Editor by early March.

A History And Archaeology Of Kentmere Hall. Part 2

(Note: Figure numbers are sequential with Part 1, published in Journal 52.)

The First Archaeological Surveys

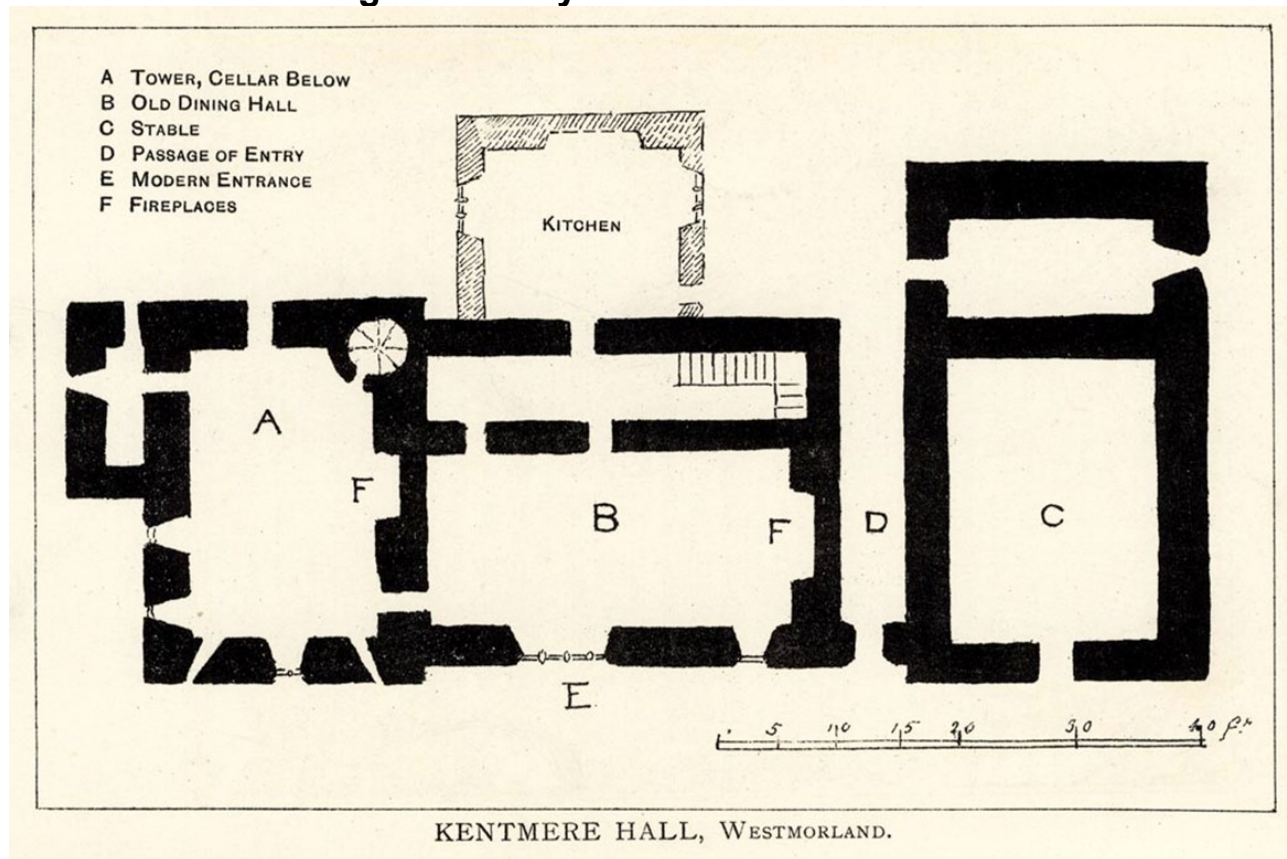


Figure 9: Taylor's plan of 1892

The first 'archaeological' plan of Kentmere Hall was made by M.W. Taylor in 1892. However he does not distinguish between the possible dates or 'phases' of the Hall's development (other than indicating that the outrigger is probably later) and the uses that he attributes are probably the contemporary ones rather than the historical ones. There are also a number of inconsistencies which require further comment. Firstly he shows the tower as having both a fireplace and a spiral (newel) stair in the north east corner although neither of these are shown on the RCHME drawing at Figure 2 in part 1. This is because the latter is showing the basement vault in the tower which equates with the ground floor level in the central hall whereas Taylor is actually showing the upper ground floor level in the tower which equates with the first floor level in the central hall. He also shows a connecting opening between the central hall and the tower which is not shown on any other survey and could not be found during the current investigations. Finally he fails to locate the doorways between the central hall and the cross passage which would have provide access to the former from the service wing.

Taylor's survey was followed in 1902 by James Curwen's which, crucially, included the upper floors of the tower for the first time (Figure 10). He shows the correct relationship between the vaulted undercroft of the tower and the ground floor of the

central hall and also a long passage giving access from one to the other (Figures 11 & 12). Above the vault is what Curwen calls the 1st storey which was the floor level shown by Taylor. Curwen then has a 2nd and 3rd storeys and finally a parapet or roof level. In recent years only the 1st storey remained and this was accessed via a rough set of stone steps at the rear of the tower through by a large opening which no doubt replaced an earlier window (Figure 5 above). The 3rd storey was replaced-probably in the 1950s- by a concrete sleeper floor which was latterly open to the elements and was only accessible by the newel staircase.

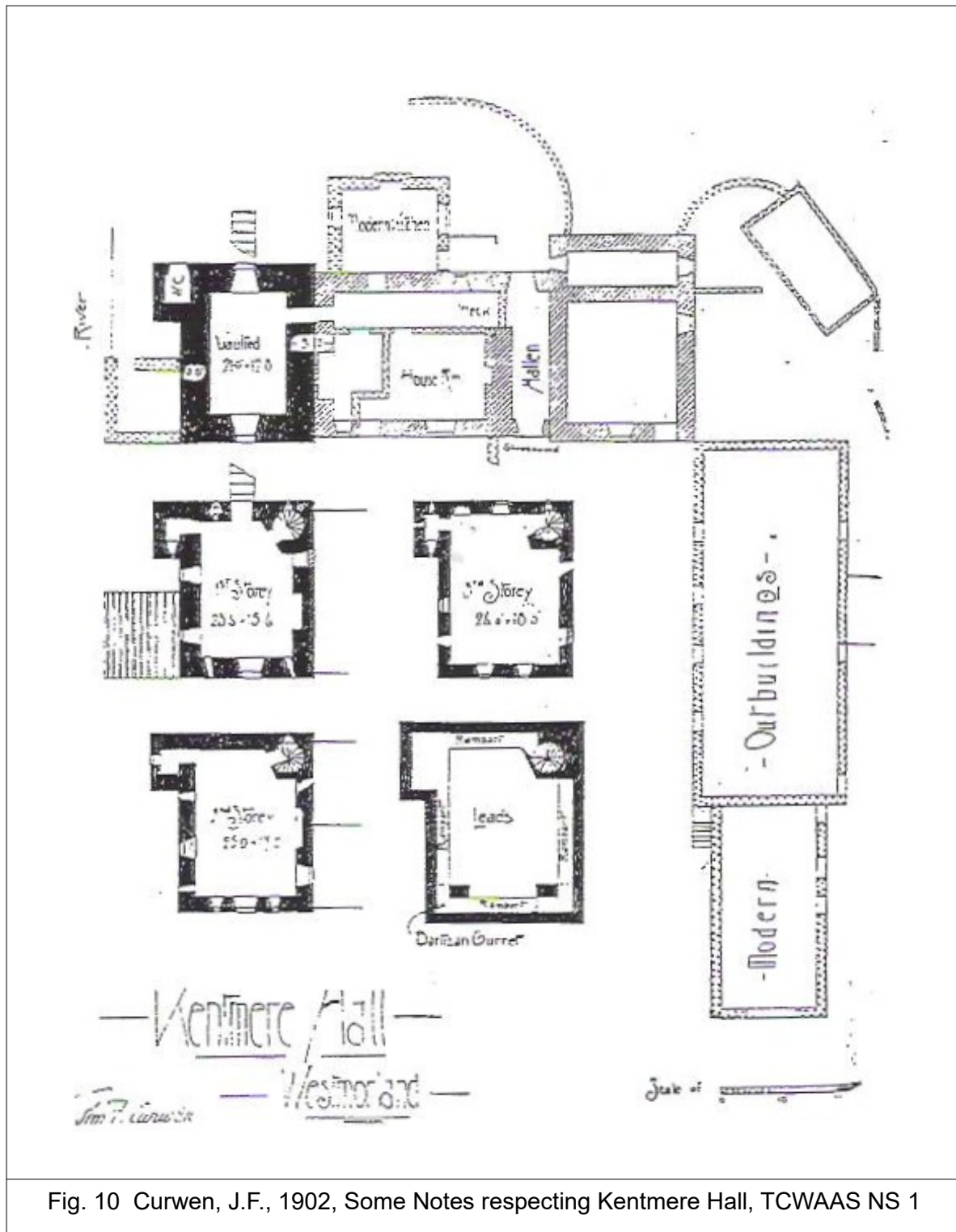


Fig. 10 Curwen, J.F., 1902, Some Notes respecting Kentmere Hall, TCWAAS NS 1



Fig 11: Vaulted undercroft of tower



Fig 12: Passage from undercroft to hall

A feature of the tower was the variety of window openings -most obviously in the south front - see Fig. 1 in Journal 52 (J52). These comprised 'arrow slits' at 1st and 2nd storey levels with a large two light traceried window centrally placed between them Figures 13 &14 below.



Fig 13. First floor arrow slit from interior and traceried window from exterior.

Immediately above the latter was a recessed panel and surround which must have held an emblem or memorial at some stage. Also there were large window openings centrally placed at vault and 2nd storey level and two intermediate ones just below the parapet at 3rd storey level (Fig 1 in J52). Interestingly these latter two were also picked up by Machel (Fig 3 in J52). With the exception of the traceried window these varying styles can be seen on the other faces of the tower which Curwen records accurately. He also shows the newel staircase in the north east corner leading from the 1st storey to the roof. The turret containing it figures prominently on Fig 5 in J52.

Other features first recorded by Curwen include the garderobe attached to the northwest corner of the tower and accessible from 2nd storey to ground level (now a W.C.) and a small opening just south of the newel stairs which may have led to the first floor of the central hall. Of particular interest was the upper (3rd) storey latterly open to the sky although it is clear from the 'ghost' of a roof line and a fireplace that this area was originally roofed.



Fig 14: 1st and 2nd storeys looking northwest. Note the rectangular window openings and garderobe entrances beyond



Fig 15: Open 3rd storey looking North. Note fireplace and window. Garderobe entrance is to left of fireplace. Newel stairs to right with ghost roofline on top (parapet) level.

The Central Hall

The central hall and rear outrigger have latterly been used as a farmhouse and adapted accordingly. Amongst other things this appeared to include inserting partitions (classified by the RCHME and Curwen as 'modern') to break up what may have originated as an open hall where more communal living would have taken place, into two living spaces and a hallway or passage from which access could be gained to the equally 'modern' rear outrigger and also to the first floor via a dog-leg staircase at the east end of the passage (See Figures 2, 9 & 10 in Journal 52). A key feature of the development the open hall concept was that of the cross passage (Curwen calls it 'the hallen') which separated the hall itself from the adjoining service wing, whilst still allowing a sufficiency of access to allow the two areas to function together adequately. The arched stone doorway giving access to the cross passage is clearly visible in the limewashed south elevation of the hall (see Figs 16 & 17). This doorway seems to be a key element in the RCHME giving a possible 14th century date, similar to the tower.

Above the doorway is a small three light mullioned window. This had stone mullions, see Fig. 16, but these were latterly replaced with a timber window frame. The central hall had a first floor occupied by bedrooms and a bathroom but might originally been open to the rafters in the true open hall tradition with the first floor being added later. These features may offer clues to this development sequence.



Fig 16. Cross passage entrance door prior to limewashing. The photo is from the 1950s demonstrating the late adoption of the limewashing fashion?



Fig 17. Cross passage: Left - looking towards front; Right- looking towards rear. The door on the left would have led into the hall.-through the 'mell' door. Immediately inside and at right angles to the door would have been a short screen -'the heck'- to protect the fireplace area from draughts

The Chapel Barn Cross Wing

The east wing of the Hall has been known locally as the Chapel Barn for many years. The origins of this are still unknown. It certainly has the look of a chapel and the large blocked window in the southern gable adds to this. However Kentmere Church was in existence largely in its current form by 1691 although there was a licence from 1453. It is unlikely that there would be a need for a chapel, almost as large, at the Hall as well and propriety chapels in aristocratic dwellings in the later Middle Ages were usually exceedingly small. It seems most likely that the name is based solely on the building's appearance. It was suggested by Thomas Machell in relation to the equally steep roof at Kentmere Church that this was needed in order to support the heavyweight lead roof covering.

Whilst the RCHME description of the cross passage as a 'screens passage' (which traditionally separates the hall from the service wing) seems to suggest that the Chapel Barn must have indeed been the service wing for the Hall, it also comments that the building retains no ancient features. This appears to give insufficient attention to the structure itself and to the large number of blocked openings, as well as to the very substantial roof timbers which are not dissimilar to those at the Church. Curwen did not discuss the cross wing at all although Taylor comments on the building's substantial construction and describes it as the *downhouse* which would traditionally have been used for brewing and washing and for storage of the *elding* or firewood. However its use in his time was as a stable and outhouse. Whilst the building has latterly continued to be used for a combination of agricultural and domestic storage use it is interesting that Mary Gregson, in her paper of 1902 on 'The Giant of Kentmere' (*The North Lonsdale Magazine and Furness Miscellany*. 4, 23-24)

describes the cross wing as ‘what was said to be the large dining hall’. This would have been a more suitable use for a room with a large south-facing mullioned window than basic service accommodation let alone as a ‘downhouse’.



Fig 18: Left: South gable of Chapel Barn cross wing, note large blocked first floor window. Right: Blocked doorway from screens passage into service wing opposite ‘mell door’.



Fig 19: Roof beams in Chapel Barn

Afterword

This concludes our study of Kentmere Hall so far as it was understood prior to the recent renovations. A further article will describe the discoveries that were made during the building work and what they can now tell us about the historic development of the Hall. The bibliography, complete with abbreviations, manuscript sources, published works, etc. is with Part 1 of this article in Journal 52.

John Trippier

Undercut foundations at Ings Village Hall - the River Gowan



The River Gowan, after passing under the bridge on Church Lane in Ings, runs SE close to Ings Village Hall and playground. The collapse of the river bank to the right (under the trees) has diverted the main flow of water in recent years closer to the left bank under the wall.



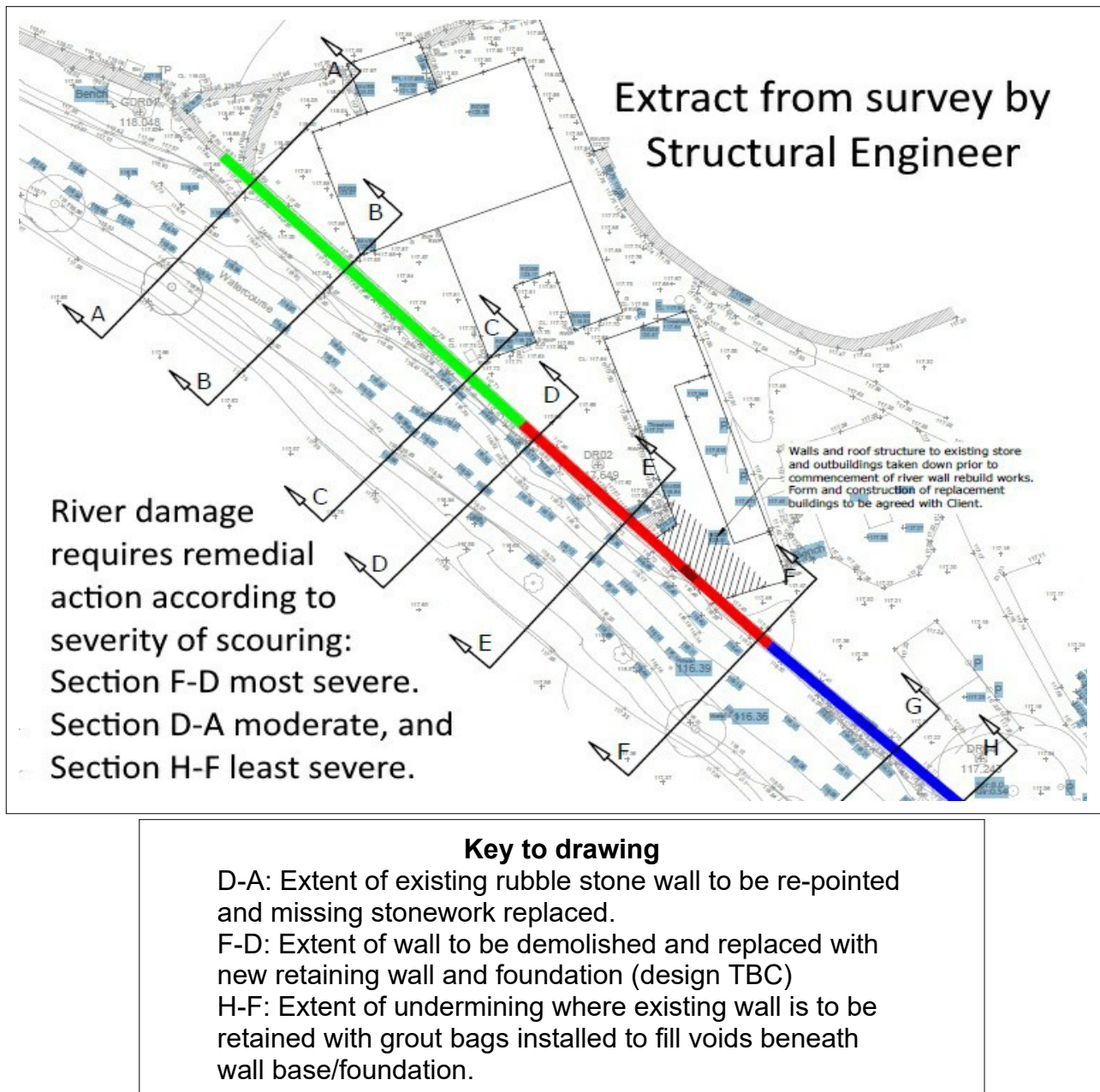
A concrete foundation has been built at some time along the foot of the wall. It would appear this ran under the full length of the Village Hall, outbuildings and playground.



The concrete foundation wall is itself being undercut but has been washed away completely just beyond the Village Hall, alongside the outbuildings and the playground.



The wall and outbuildings above the undercut foundation are collapsing. Beyond the outbuildings the foundations are undercut alongside the playground.



Measures are being taken to rectify the situation. A structural survey has been carried out and discussions opened with possible contractors, subsequent to meetings with all interested parties, the Environment Agency, Rivers Authority, Ings Parish Hall, and Staveley with Ings Parish Council who have responsibility for the playground.

The walls and roof of the outbuildings at their SW corner will require to be rebuilt. There the outbuilding walls are built on the river wall so subsidence has already occurred. It is thus proposed to rebuild the outbuilding walls separate from the river wall to give more protection there in the future and to take the opportunity to remodel and re-purpose the building which is currently used only for storage. The work will be carried out in two stages, firstly stabilising the river wall and then outbuildings reconstruction. Designs for the two stages of the work are yet to be finalised so costings are not yet available.

John Hiley

Tales from the Tapes: Mike Houston interviewed by John Hiley.
Recorded in the home of Mike Houston in Bowston 23rd February 2021

JH: It's the 23rd of February 2021, 10 o'clock in the morning and I am sat here with Mike Houston. Of course, Mike has been a stalwart of the Staveley History Society and prior to knowing him as a fellow member of the committee, I was taught French by Mike at Windermere Grammar School. I have known him a lot of years. So I am going to start by asking Mike about his early life. Where and when were you born Mike?

MH: Yes, well, it was quite a way, distance from here although I have cycled there in the past, yes. I was born at a little hamlet really called Beanley, and to give you an idea of the size is difficult because there were no shops or anything like that. I think that there were about fifteen houses, two farms, most of the houses were farm labourers. I wasn't actually born in a gamekeepers cottage but my parents moved there when I was about four years old so I can't remember anything that happened before I went to there. My father became a gamekeeper just before the war, before the 2nd world war. It was a single house, it wasn't actually in the village, it was quite an adventure to go half a mile when you were four year old.

JH: Just let me back up one stage. Beanley is in the North East of the country...?

MH: Yes, well let me take two places that people might have heard of, Wooler and they might have heard of Alnwick and there are two different routes that you can take from Alnwick to Wooler and one goes inland a bit, more towards the Cheviot hills and the other one goes virtually straight up. Now I was on the branch, if you like, that was at the foothills of the Cheviot hills and the church that we went to was Eglingham. This is in Northumberland, if you saw it on a map you would probably say 'oh that's Eglingham cos that's how it's spelt', but you pronounce it Eglinsham.

JH: So, we haven't established when you were born yet and you have mentioned you moved to Beanley just before the second world war.

MH: Yes, so I was born in 1934 right in the middle of the year on June 20th. I would be born at a little hamlet called Hedgley, West Hedgley, which has only six houses.

JH: Born at home? MH: Yes yes, born at home. JH: That was quite normal was it?

MH: Yes, I suppose the district nurse would come along. I've never really gone into it but I suppose that was what happened, 'cos that was still happening in my lifetime right up through the war. You know, you didn't go to hospital unless it was something serious.

JH: And your father was already gamekeeping?

MH: Yes, yes. Houston is a Scottish name and sometime, I've never gone into my history, but they must have migrated, I think, from south Scotland and come over the border. My grandfather was a forester and was very good with trees. I hardly knew him. I would only be five when he died but he certainly knew his work. There's a place you might have heard of called Kielder where there's quite a forest and I know

that in his little nursery he bred a lot of the trees that went up into Kielder forest. He used to walk, and it was a long way, and when I say a long way, I don't mean he walked daily but he used to walk and stay and then come back home again. It would be best part of 20 or 30 miles to Kielder.

JH: And would your father be employed by a landowner?

MH: Yes, and that family still exists. It's like a double barrelled name. Some family called Carr, quite a lot of Carrs in Northumberland, and Ellison, the combined name was Carr Ellison and that was the name of the family for whom he was employed.

JH: So you would immediately be immersed in all the outdoor activities that your Dad was paid for as a gamekeeper?

MH: Yes, that's right. That was bang on the beginning WW2 you see. We went to Beanley in 1938 and within a year the war happened. It was quite a big estate was the Hedgley estate and there was a syndicate that used to come. They were like a shooting syndicate I imagine, I don't know, but I knew they came from Newcastle so they were probably Northumberland Fusiliers because they had barracks in Newcastle-on-Tyne and these aristocrats would come up and they would pay I think, because they were the only ones that used to pay...but there were loads of poachers that didn't!

JH: This would be pheasant, would it?

MH: Yes, partridge and pheasants. He would rear them. I've got a photograph of me, aged about four I suppose, peering over the side of what we called a foster mother which was where you had your chicks and I'm pointing down at these little chicks....

JH: What was that term?

MH: Foster mother. It's an incubator which was where you had your rows of eggs. It was all heated by paraffin, no electricity in those days at all, and it was crucial because if the temperature dropped too much you would lose your whole set. Occasionally my Mother and Father they would go out and I would be left in charge. I had a sister, seven years older than me, but I would be left in charge. You had to turn them every day. You had a cross on one side of the egg and a nought on the other, and I was terribly absent minded and still am and I could be in the middle of counting these and I would hear a bird outside and I'd go out and come back and I'd think, gosh, am I turning these from noughts to crosses because they would be half turned you see, half the tray..

JH: How many was there?

MH: Of these eggs? Oh, I imagine there'd be maybe 30 in a drawer. I think it was about 21 days for them to hatch, I can't remember. But I knew then as a little lad how long, 'cos I used to hate it! You see, you were stuck, you couldn't get out and you had to turn these eggs and keep an eye on the paraffin heaters to make sure they didn't go out!

To be continued