

Recollections of the Green Path area

I grew up on Portland Street in the early 1950s. During the 1950s children had a lot of freedom and we were able to roam great distances and for long periods of time, we generally did this in groups or with a best friend. Our parents did not have to worry about us being run over as there were few cars on the road and after the war there probably seemed little to worry about with regard to safety. There were still Horses and Carts, and groceries were delivered from the local corner shop by a boy on a bicycle that had a huge basket at the front to carry the goods.

When I was very small our milk was delivered by a horse and cart by Mr Loxam who farmed Ripley Farm. There was no farm house at Ripley Farm and the Loxams who farmed it lived 2 doors up from us on Portland Street. We had our milk from them as due to the war we had been allocated to them for our supply, during the war and rationing people could not choose who they got their meat and milk from. My mother continued to purchase her milk from the Portland Street Loxams long after they no longer had their own cows. I have a memory of the milk being ladled into a jug from the horse and cart. Mr Loxam senior died when I was very young and his son Hedrick took over the Farm and the milk delivery.

Gradually Ripley Farm that was already a small acreage and rented land was built on by the RLI and the NHS and then the remainder by Ripley School that became Ripley St Thomas School. This school I believe still offers some rural science tuition and the old farm buildings were used for this. At the location where the Women's Unit is on Ashton Road now there was a little Lodge, that was used by Doctors at the RLI, and a sweeping driveway with a meadow either side that went all the way up to the Farm, this land was used for hay I do not remember seeing any cows grazing there, the cows grazed some of the land in front of Ripley school and over the railway bridge into Ripley Heights. The Meadow was behind a wall topped with green tall iron railings on Ashton Road, there was nothing other than the Lodge between the Infirmary and Ripley School other than an Army hut until the building work began to build the first Ashton Road Clinic. The Meadow land went down to the Canal; it was a very pleasant piece of land.

My first memories of Fairfield are from a very young age probably between the age of 2 and 3; my mother liked to get out for walks particularly on summer evenings and Sundays. One of the favourites was to walk up the canal to the start of the Long Pads also known as the Kendal Pads. Sometimes the path, which became narrow at the Aldcliffe Road end, was very overgrown with thorns and nettles and rather scary and painful for a small person, where it widened close to Lucy brook it could be very muddy and well-trodden where the cows had crossed the path from one field to another; we always seemed to finish the walk, probably wearing wellies and well prepared for the adventure. Except where there were gates I never saw over the hedges until I was able to ride my bicycle or my pony this way when I was older. The path came to a narrow area between 2 standing stones and then out into the lane behind Edenbreck Farm that was a little farm with a whitewashed stone cottage that we passed as we turned right at the corner to go down the path to the swings and past the allotments. At that time I did not know anyone at Edenbreck Farm. Sometimes we went the other way, however this was my preferred route as I loved to go to the swings. There were 2 swings and sometimes there could be a long wait to get a turn, there were no swings for small children. There was a see-saw that was just a plank really and if the other person was a different weight did not work very well and could be painful on the feet if it went down to fast at your end, I remember there being what was called an American Swing that was a very long plank of wood that was connected at either end to the frame above by 2 iron poles at either end and it swung to and fro and many children could ride on it at the same time. At the

ends where the poles were attached there were no safety features and I seem to remember hearing that a girl had a very serious injury to her leg and the swing was taken down. I also think there was a roundabout at one time (policeman's helmet type). I remember how satisfying it was when I learned to work the swing. The swings were fairly high up and there used to be plenty of room below for the bonfire on 5th November.

At the bottom there was a row of lock up garages on Wingate Saul Road, naughty boys used to climb and run around on top of these while the men on the allotments shouted at them to get off. We would go home around the Girls Grammar School field and down the Short Pads past Carr House Farm under the Railway Bridge and up Carr House Lane.

I have many happy memories of the Allotments my Mother got one when I was about 4 and continued to have an allotment at different times until she was about 80 years old. I remember the peacefulness, the light quality and the beautiful sunsets looking over the fields.

As a pupil at Dallas Road School I soon became familiar with the playing field at the bottom of Cromwell Road. I do not think we ever went there on a wet day; it was our games field so there were a lot of weeks when we walked from school to play shinty in the winter and rounders in the summer; the boys playing football and cricket. I remember the bottom of the field closer to Lucy brook could be muddy and there were always a lot of cow claps everywhere which was awful if you ran or fell into it and the crust broke and the liquid inside got on and inside shoes and or clothes.

We practised here for sports day in the summer; sports day was always held close to the end of term in July. I remember there were egg and spoon, sack, obstacle, and relay races for each age group and we were divided into the 4 school houses to compete: there were never parents' races. Some parents did come to watch, I remember my mother coming with our little brother Fred in his pram, I think my elder brother Reg took a movie film of some of this. It was a horrible field really for sports as there were very few level areas and the cow claps were a constant worry.

I remember one sports day, that must have been my birthday, I got bored and wandered off across Lucy brook where there was a little old barn that had fallen into disrepair it was very dark inside and Lucy brook seemed to run through the darkest end of it. I was aware that there were sounds of someone in the barn so did not go very far inside, so I meandered back to sit with the other children, in this time I had missed my race however no one missed me. In my teenage years I used to sit in this barn in the dark when I was in a bad mood, at that time there was some child tea set toys there.

Up on the hill on the right side where there was a hedge behind eventually towards my last year at junior school a changing room was built, not for us but we were sometimes allowed to use this and the teacher would have a key for the locks.

I used to go frog spawning with other children; some of my friends had older sisters and I remember them being with us and seemed to be in charge they must have been about 11 so I would have been about 7. The best place was a boggy field down Aldcliffe Road opposite Haverbreaks Bridge on the left side [now Flora field], this field went all the way up towards the Long Pads, it was very boggy until it was drained at a later date, May flowers also grew here. There used to be a meadow by Mr Kitchens house on Aldcliffe Road that was later built on and either this or the field behind was at one time used by the Vale of Lune Rugby club before they got

the site they are on now. My late Husband Bill told me this; his Grandfather James Lupton was the Groundsman at that time. This land was farmed by the Gifford's and the Carr House Loxams. I used to see the farmers a lot as I would wander on this land when I was older like a wild thing full of the belief that I had a right to do what I wanted so as long as I did not disturb the animals, trample anything and closed gates behind me.

I used to play around Aldcliffe Hall with other friends when we were in junior school it was derelict and dangerous I remember the family graves in the woodland there, there were some marvellous horse chestnut trees there.

My first job was as a paper girl when I was about 11, I was really too young but looked older, my first round was Fairfield I would go from Bells Newsagents on King Street up Middle Street do both ends of High Street along Fenton Street across to Castle Park and Castel Hill, I delivered to the Prison then on West Road and Fairfield Road, some of Westbourne Road, and then onto Sibsey Street doing all the streets in the area ending on Anthony Road. This was considered to be a small round and this was early morning and evening Monday to Saturday for 8 shillings and 6 pence a week. This was to pay for riding lessons and I had to do 2 weeks work to afford 1 riding lesson. When I was older I did the Sunday round as well which was better paid but was a lot of papers to deliver, I did other areas as well and often did the whole of Haverbreaks.

When I was on my way back from my paper round I often used to pass Dorothy Loxam from Carr House farm with a hand cart delivering the milk to Fairfield. As time passed little Linda Loxam would be with her and then later Linda would be taking the milk out on her own. I used to like to go to Carr House if we needed any milk as it was only cooled and often bottled while I waited, it was beautiful milk nothing like what I get today from my doorstep milkman.

I used to go to see Tommy Loxam at Carr House for hay for our Guinea Pig, he was a very kind man and would give me a very big bag of hay for 6(oid) pence every other time; he could never remember if I had paid last time so I probably got it free most of the time. We got the sawdust free from Fox's Yard timber mill by the canal on Aldcliffe Road, where the basin and student flats are now.

Eventually I saved up enough money to buy a pony. Molly. This would not have happened if I had not had the good fortune to have the use of a field on Haverbreaks, by Netherdene, that belonged to Mr Magauran, a General surgeon at the RLI, and the use of the stable from Tommy Loxam; both were very kind to me when I knocked at their doors and asked for their help. This was one of the stipulations laid down by my parents who were not very happy about my ambitions to own a pony, this venture had not to cost them one penny and it never did, however it was very hard work. The Loxams apparently cut hay in Mr Magauran's field and sometimes put stock on there to keep the grass down so it was especially good of them to help me. I was still at school somewhere between 14 and 15 when this occurred and working so hard to bring in the money to look after the pony that I did not really get a huge amount of time to fully enjoy having her.

Over the next few years the situation on Haverbreaks became a little complicated due to well-wishers believing my greedy pony was at the point of starvation and bringing her all manner of unhealthy foodstuffs to eat at the road side field. She had repeated attacks of ill health due to this and the Vets bills were very expensive so I decided that she should move somewhere where all these animal lovers would not be able to follow. I never would feed another person's animal and do not know why people think it is ok to do so.

When I approached Tommy Loxam he said I could use the stable at Edenbreck on a permanent basis for a very reasonable rent. Previously she had been stabled at Carr house when she was ill. I rode Molly to Edenbreck from Haverbreaks along the Kendal Pads carrying a bucket of horse nuts and a bag of horse things and a sack of hay. I made her comfortable in the stable and went to the white cottage to ask where I could get some water. Jean Wilkinson, Tommy's cousin, opened the door and I said she's in the stable and could I have some water please. Jean was very friendly but very surprised; she had no idea that Molly was coming. She was very helpful and became a wonderful friend until the time of her death many years later. Jean lived at Edenbreck with her lovely husband Fred and son Michael who was a little older than me. On that morning I had to get to work so Jean said to come and see her later. The time I spent at Edenbreck was a very happy time where I came to know many members of the extended Loxam family.

The stable at Edenbreck was roomy; it had a full door that opened inwards but where there had been a window to one side there was now just an opening so she could look out. Eventually we whitewashed the interior of the stable: the guys on the allotments gave me lime to make whitewash with and I gave them manure; they thought this was wonderful.

Some of the buildings at Edenbreck were not in good repair with holes in the roof, in the next building that adjoined the stable I was able to find dry area where I could keep hay, straw, pony food and equipment.

Eventually Robin Loxam needed the stable for his pig venture so Molly had to move to another building further down the yard, this was done without any notice or discussion however my Dad did help to make the new area secure and habitable and ok for a pony. I didn't pay much rent so there was no point falling out over this and I was still at Edenbreck.

Edenbreck farmhouse then had an outside toilet that backed on to the allotments and an adjoining building with a sliding door and a big sink that held the Wilkinson's property. Next to that was a shippon that was in poor repair with the roof coming in down to the stable that was in good repair. Further down the yard, towards the field, was an open barn where the Loxam's stored hay, opposite this was an area of ground very overgrown that had probably been an allotment that backed onto the allotments and had the field to the far side and the manure heap at the other end near to Molly's new stable.

I tried to clear the enclosed land with a small sickle scythe so that Molly could be let out there when I was mucking her out. Molly was crafty and on a couple of occasions did get out of the stable and this little paddock; she once galloped off right across Cromwell's field, up Cromwell Road, up Aldcliffe Road and back to Haverbreaks. She cleared the corrugated gate, then at the bottom of Cromwell Road; for a pony she could jump very well, sometimes she was shod and sometimes she wasn't.

Jean and Fred used to keep Edenbreck looking lovely redoing the white exterior on a regular basis. The carpets and mats used to come out for a good beating and were then dragged along the grass in the meadow at the end of the yard, several women in the family would come to do this the grass would clean the carpets.

George Loxam, Tommy's dad, was Jean's mum's brother. George had a really nice wife and they lived on Carr House Lane. George was a man of few words and he used to ride down to Carr House Farm on his bike and push it back home in the evening, he seemed to be a great age. He

wore clogs and a farmer's smock. I remember their first tractor and seeing George driving it along Aldcliffe road, this tractor looked old then, this is the 1950s to the early 60s, I could be wrong but it did not seem to have a proper steering wheel. George never seemed to notice if you were there but as I was a child that was probably the reason. I only heard him speak once when he thought some hay had been vandalised and told Fred Wilkinson that he thought he would have kept a better eye on things and Fred told him the hay had been dumped, unbaled, by the younger members of the family.

Jean and Fred lived at Edenbreck farm into the late 1970s, at one time there had been fears that Edenbreck would be demolished and Jean was worried regarding this, I told my brother Reg and he was able to get a preservation order placed on Edenbreck, apparently anyone could do this, I do not know if this is the reason Edenbreck is still there or if the plan was cancelled by the Council.

I used to ride Molly along both the Long Pads and Short Pads; I do not remember anyone ever being too troubled by this on the odd occasion there was someone coming the other way. However one day there were Council workmen putting up a middle stoop between the 2 standing stones at the back of Edenbreck this would allow only for one person to squeeze through and certainly not allow a pony or a cyclist to pass through. The senior man knew me and was very happy to stop me riding down the pads, after they had gone I wobbled this stoop until it fell over and then did the same thing the next time it was put up, they knew it was me but could not prove it. Eventually my friend Joan Bamber wrote to the council to complain that she had not been able to pass the stones with her pushchair and baby so the Council abandoned the plan, I do not think historically that they could ban horses using this route as it must be an old bridle path. I always thought it was a pack road from Preston to Kendal that was a common path before the building of the canal.

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