

Recollections of growing up at Edenbreck Farm Cottage and the Green Path area

I moved from Bailrigg with my Mum and Dad, Jean and Fred Wilkinson, to Edenbreck Farm in 1956 when I was 6 years old.

At that time the house was white. My Dad used to redo it every few years. I think it had been white for a long time as I have a fairly old painting which was done before the allotments were there.

We rented the house from my Great Uncle, George Loxam and his family, who farmed at Carr House Farm.



Painting of Edenbreck Farm before the allotments

I spent many happy hours at Carr House as David and Robin Loxam and I are similar ages and I was also very keen on farming.

Most of the buildings at Edenbreck Farm were not used apart from a 2 bay Dutch barn which was used to store hay which was then taken back to Carr House Farm during the winter. We also used the building immediately adjacent to the house which I think would originally have been the dairy when it was a dairy farm. It was a single storey building. We called it the wash house and it was where my Mum had the washing machine and we also used it for general storage. The house had 3 bedrooms but no bathroom. Downstairs there was a kitchen and living room. Baths were taken in a tin bath in the kitchen until my Dad converted one of the bedrooms to a bathroom. The toilet was across the yard from the house, a cold trip in the winter!

Next to the wash house was a shippon, then a feed store with a loft, a stable and then the Dutch barn. Past the barn there was another shippon built of brick and wood. Opposite the barn were a couple of cart sheds and a brick pig sty. The whole thing made a fantastic playground for games like hide and seek and war games. We used to make tommy guns out of a piece of wood with 2 six inch nails for handles and make the rat-a-tat firing noise ourselves; none of this modern electronic noises! My Mum used to jump out of her skin when she was hanging out the washing and we all jumped out of buildings firing at each other!

When we first moved to Edenbreck Farm, the bottom part of Sunnyside Lane from beyond the turning to Sunnyside Close, was not surfaced. It was just black cinders, great for doing spectacular skids on your bike but rough on the knees when you fell off! The hill going up to the right of Edenbreck Farm and leading to the top of Westbourne Road we called Piggy Hill. I've no idea where the name came from. We used to have great fun riding down it on trolleys made from old wood and pram wheels although it gave you a severe shaking as it was surfaced with round cobbles.

Bonfire night was always a big event in the area. The families with children in Sunnyside Lane and Sunnyside Close used to build one on the cinders on Sunnyside Lane. When Sunnyside Lane was properly surfaced we moved the bonfire to the top of Piggy Hill on the wider part at the top behind Abraham Heights farm buildings. There was usually another bonfire on the small triangle of land where Ashfield Avenue meets Sunnyside Lane and which is now covered in trees. There was also a third one by the play area on what is now called Fairfield Green. All the children used to collect wood for weeks in advance to see who could build the biggest bonfire. I think Pony Wood was probably plundered for wood from time to time although it was a fair way to drag it back along the pads and tricky if you met someone walking the other way as it was quite narrow in places. We had a big advantage as the Thoms family lived in Sunnyside Lane. They owned the

builders at the bottom of Queen Street, nearly opposite the Odeon cinema [behind Kitchen Corner]. They used to provide a lorry load of scrap wood every year. There was also someone in Sunnyside Close who worked in a furniture shop and used to give us a load of old furniture so we always had a good blaze.

In the mid to late 1960s we had a problem with people sleeping rough in the Dutch barn at Edenbreck Farm. I guess that being fairly close to the city centre it was a convenient place for them. In those days there was still a local bobby, PC Hull I think it was, and he used to regularly call in and turf them out. Eventually they stopped coming.

The field now called Hay Meadow had a football and cricket pitch on it. It was used by Dallas Road School and I remember walking down there from school to play games on it. The school sports day was also held there once a year and, as well as running races for each class, featured the traditional egg and spoon, sack, and 3 legged races. The football pitch was fairly level but the cricket pitch was further over to the right as you came in from Cromwell Road. The wicket itself was level but the ground sloped gently up at one side of it and down at the other.

Where the Fairfield Orchard is now was known as Long Meadow. It was part of Carr House Farm and, along with Big Meadow, was cut for hay every summer and occasionally grazed by cattle. The hay baling was originally done by Brian Mackereth from Stodday and then by Roger Gifford from Abraham Heights until Carr House Farm got its own baler in the late 1960s. They used to make a lot of hay on fields at Haverbreaks as well.

As I said earlier, I was very keen on farming and used to spend a lot of time at Carr House. Up until about 1961 they still used a horse for the farm work. I think the last one was called Dolly. We used to go into the field to catch her at the start of the day. We would lead her to a water trough so we could climb on it to get up on to her back and ride her back into the yard. There was no mains water to the fields, so in summer a daily job was to fill churns with water and take them round the various water troughs so the cows had something to drink. We also used to deliver loads of manure to the Fairfield allotments for anyone who wanted to buy some. Once the horse was replaced by a tractor these jobs suddenly got a lot easier.

In the 1960s Carr House started showing some of their cattle. Robin Loxam got very keen on this and I used to go to the shows to help out. We would usually travel in the back of the wagon with the cattle so we could get into the show for free! As well as Lancaster Show we went to shows at Garstang, Burton, Kirkby Lonsdale and Kendal. We also went to the Royal Lancashire Show a couple of times. In those days it was always held at Blackpool.

My parents lived at Edenbreck Farm until the late 1970s; I moved away after I finished university in 1972.

Michael Wilkinson

Note: The painting opposite was done by an amateur artist sometime in the early 1960s: My Mum used to go out to talk to him and watch the painting developing. Dorothy Loxam from Carr House Farm bought it as a gift for her.



Edenbreck Farm Cottage