

The End of the Wood



MEMORIES OF A WHARFEDALE FARM

By

Elizabeth Clay

AUTHOR NOTE

After taking early retirement from my career as a Primary School teacher I developed an interest in family history. I collected some information from family photos and documents I inherited from my mother's side of the family. They were tenants of the same farm for many generations and this meant I had little difficulty in accessing further information through Parish Church Registers and Census Reports. A Thompson family tree came first and research into the 'Thompson Seven' followed. My maternal Grandmother, Beatrice Higgins nee Thompson, had told me stories about one or two of the seven children of Thomas and Mary Thompson and I was curious to find out more information. The most significant of the seven was Jonathan Thompson who built the Fell Hotel in Burnsall in 1902. It became the Devonshire Fell in 1999 when it was purchased by the Duke of Devonshire and was completely remodelled internally. The writing of the "The End of the Wood" came about as a result of my research and the feelings triggered by a visit to Wharfedale in 1999. The wood above my childhood home of Wood End farm, Barden had been felled and the area cleared for replanting. I felt it was time to set down the memories of a very special place.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to my husband John for his editing and photographic skills in compiling this book and to Muriel Clarke and Jean Marshall for their recollections of life at Wood End.

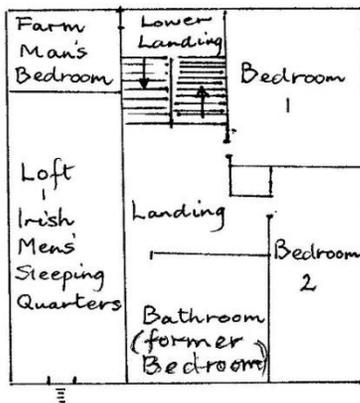
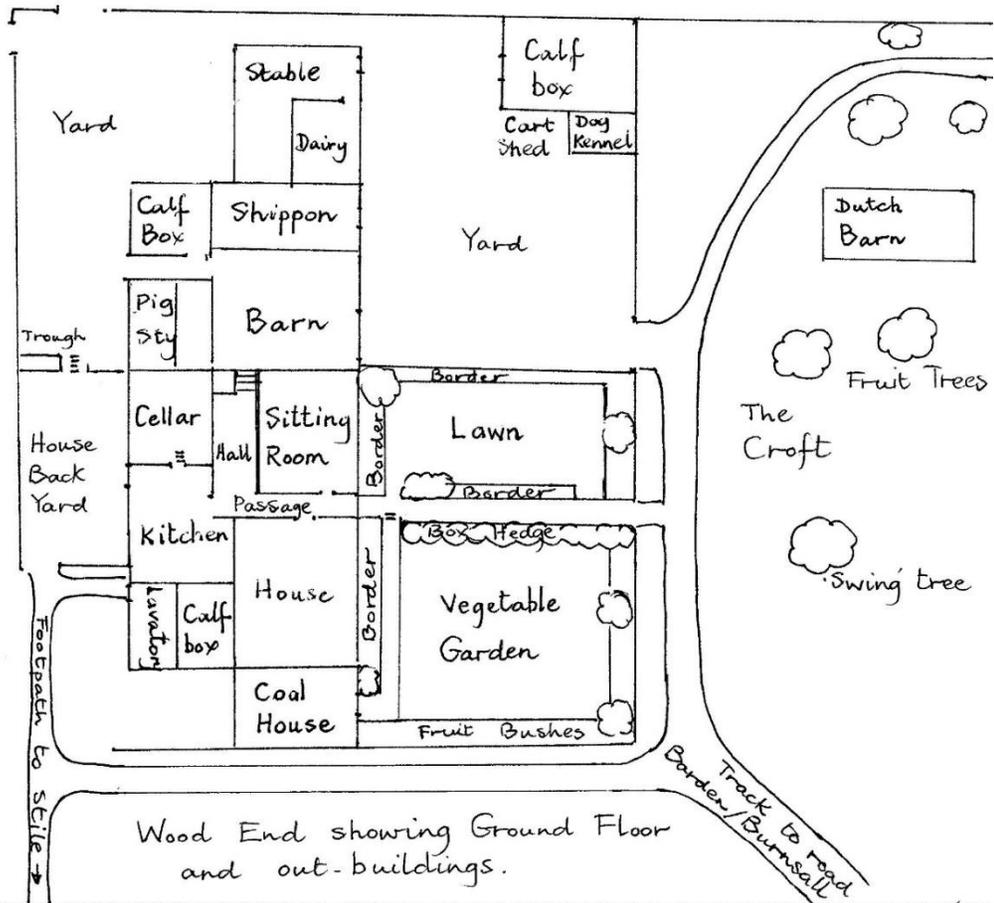
Front Cover-Elizabeth Clay in the wood above Wood End Farm 1992

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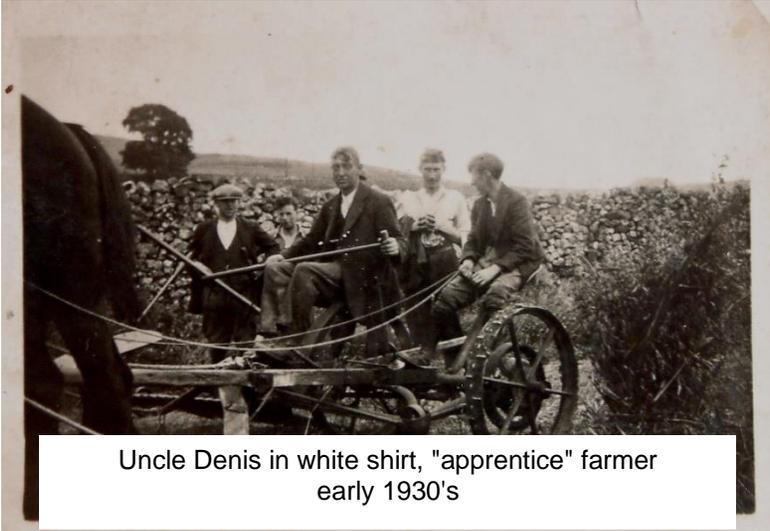
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Wood End - First Floor.



Uncle Denis in white shirt, "apprentice" farmer early 1930's



Uncle Denis and Auntie Frances on their wedding day 1941



Uncle Denis (with nose in mug) during a break at hay-time



Burnsall School 1897
Grandma Beatie - her white pinafore billowing in the breeze



My Great Granddad
George Thompson 1902



Beatie on her 21st Birthday 1908



My Mother Kathleen in her Women's Land Army greatcoat 1942



Grandma Beatie and me in the Croft Wood End 1948



Jean and Muriel Thompson in the 1930's



Burnsall Churchyard 1999, me beside Great. Great Grandparents gravestone



Wood End Farm Barden with Simon's Seat in the background. Summer 1999



Dowsill Low Barn by the River Wharfe



Me and the Austin that wouldn't start



Father, Doodles and me with our "borrowed" tractor



Wood End in Winter, circa 1980, not enough snow for sledging!





Me and "Bobby" the farm horse 1953



Burnsall shop and Post Office 1930's. Queen Mary in car on a visit to the Duke of Devonshire's Bolton Abbey estate



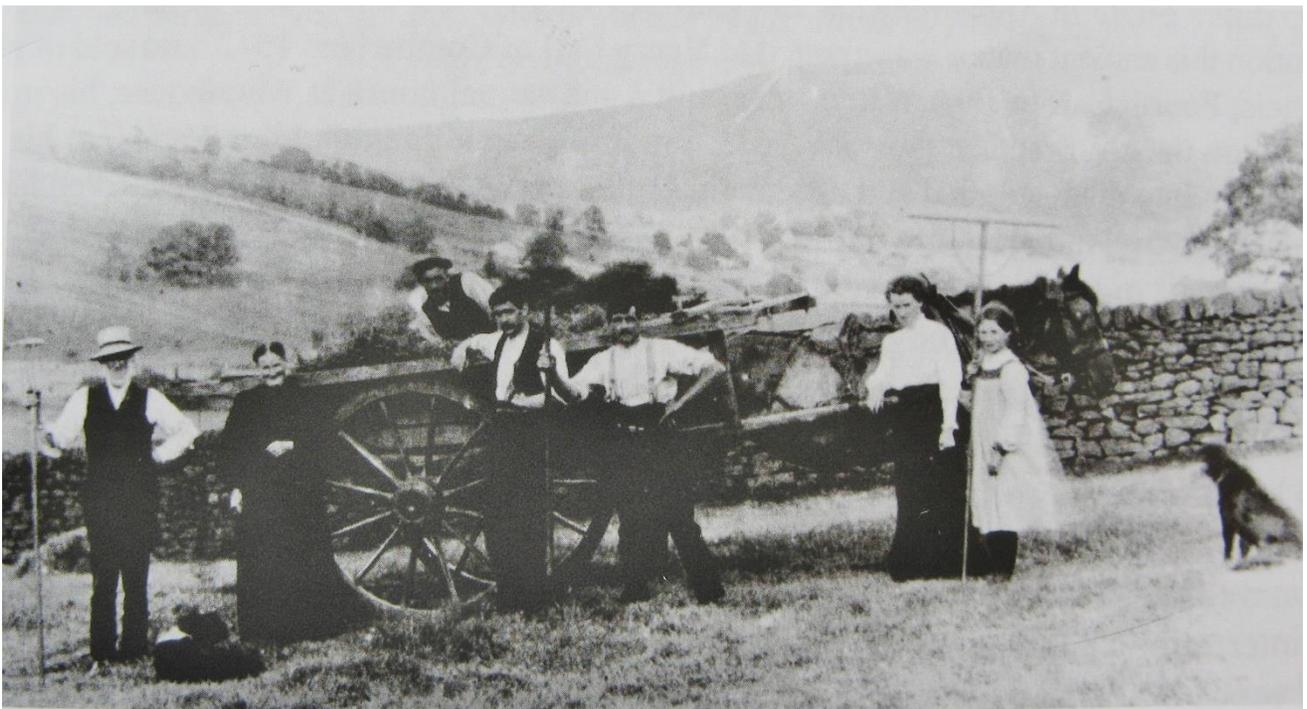
Burnsall shop and Post office converted to a house circa 2003



Burnsall Feast Sports held on the Green 1902



Ivy Cottage, Burnsall 2003.
Granma Beatie's home 1920 - 1965



These two photographs⁹⁴ show members of the Thompson family haymaking during the first part of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1 'WOOD END'

When our time on this earth is getting short we go back into time more and more. Many of the people and places we knew as a child exist now only in the mind. They are there in our memory waiting, undimmed and ready to provide us with a place and time where our mind feels happy and at rest. Those first-time sensations were filled with the excitement of being alive and seeing with an intensity that we will never recover. We look with the greatest intensity at nature, at the growth and regeneration as season follows season. ¹

I can think of no better place for a child to grow up in than a farm. Farming folk like those of my childhood days felt that they all belonged to one another. Their families went a long way back in time and they were related to one another in the distant past. People long - dead could return and find their own names and their own faces replicated somewhere among the succeeding generations. ²

I grew up in a place such as this, on a farm that was cut off from the outside world. A private world where I was free to feel the sensations that I return to now only in memory trying to recapture that sense of sunshine, the green of the leaves and the singing of the birds as the world turned. ³

Wood End farm floats in time and space, forever preserved in my mind's eye. In my head I can still move freely within the farmhouse and roam through the woods and over the fields. ⁴

These four paragraphs owe much to the childhood memories of two authors of the twentieth and nineteenth century. I empathised with the feelings expressed for their childhood homes and therefore included part of their descriptions in my own recollections of those early years.

¹ 'The Springs of Affection' - Maeve Brennan. ² 'The Country Child' - Alison Utley.

³ R.L.Stevenson. ⁴ 'A House Unlocked' - Penelope Lively

"The woods are lovely dark and deep." This line is from one of my favourite poems by the American poet Robert Frost. It brings back memories of the farmhouse called Wood End.

In March 2002 I took a short holiday in Wharfedale, part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and more importantly to me, the place where I was born and spent my childhood. During a drive around old familiar places I saw that the wood of my childhood memories had been cut down from the fell-side to reveal a rock-strewn and for me an alien landscape. The sight of this wasteland caused an almost physical pain within me. Five generations of my family, and perhaps more, had played, walked and foraged for food and fuel here and, as I so often had done, listened in their beds to the wind and the night owls as they moved over the wood. It was the end of the wood that had caused the farm to be named many hundreds of years ago. However, the farmhouse and all its outbuildings still nestled into the hillside as they had always done and the wood to the side of them, known as Garrelgum, still flourished. This wood is mixed woodland with silver birch, sycamore, ash and goat willow in one part and a cash crop of larch and pine in the furthest part from the farm. The latter will eventually be cut down and the land replanted in the same way as the wood that sheltered my childhood home.

Garrelgum is forever associated with the end of the long Dales Winter and the coming of Spring for it was from here the call of the first cuckoo always drifted across the fields to our farmhouse. Spring flowers such as bluebell, primrose, wind-flower and wood- sorrel grew under the fresh green canopy and were picked as a posy for Mum long before the picking of wild flowers was discouraged and in the case of some species became an unlawful act. Garrelgum is very ancient woodland and was known as 'Gelgoam' in the Yorkshire dialect of Wood End inhabitants. The name comes from the Anglo-Saxon as do other local land and place names. It has a place in local folklore as recorded by the writer W. A. Shuffrey in 1903 in his book "Some Craven Worthies". He wrote of a woman called Pal Thompson, an ancestor of mine, who lived at Wood End some two hundred years ago. She had gained a reputation as a witch, as many eccentric ladies living in isolated places had done before her, and was

said to be able to cast an evil eye. A farmer in Lancashire lost a good 'beast', a cow, after Pal had cast her bad spell. A less worrying sign of her skills was talked of well into the twentieth century. A misty cloud hovering over the wood known as Garrelgum was referred to by folk on the other side of the river valley as Pal Thompsons' dishcloth. Rain would soon follow its appearance and so Pal became a weather forecaster and remained so for several generations after her death. Shuffrey and the rather more well-known Dales author Halliwell Sutcliffe who lived at White Abbey, Linton near Grassington recorded many rather fanciful tales of old Wharfedale characters in their books. Sutcliffe himself admitted that legend, tradition and imagination were at least as valid for him as proven record.

The farm passed out of the Thompson family in 1954 but retained its' hold on those who knew it as home. There were many of these as there has been a dwelling on the site for five hundred years and probably longer. Burnsall church registers record the marriage in January 1612 of Mary Inman and John Moorhouse of Wood End.

I discussed with a cousin, a past resident of the farm, my hope that the field names had remained the same after 1954. The new tenants came from a farming family across the river and therefore knew something of the history of the farm but probably didn't know all of the ancient field names and history of the land.

I know that many of the field names have changed over the years. Tenant farmers probably shortened ancient field names or renamed them completely. Bronte Bedford Payne in her book "Barden in Wharfedale" refers to Wood End field names that I do not recognise. They are likely to date from the time of pre-Conquest settlement and a few from the Anglo-French after the Norman Conquest. The names she mentions that I can't recall are West Leys, Leyr, Calf Garth, High and Low Birk Close. Field names that have remained almost the same with slightly changed spelling are Bracken Haw, High and Low Dowsgill, The Hagg and Bombay. I refer to these fields and describe them spelling them as they were pronounced in the local dialect.

The following information was first recorded in 1805 by Dr Whittaker in his book "The History of Craven": The river Wharfe curves around the Low meadows providing a boundary for the lands of Wood End. Several of these meadows became known as Negro land and Dr Whittaker relates that in the mid- seventeenth century a farmer called Waters saved the life of a young lady set upon by a band of ruffians. The flat land by the river was given to him as a reward for his gallantry. A descendant of this man, one William Waters, who died in the West Indies, bequeathed the rent of this land to trustees for the benefit of mission work among the negroes. I believe this continued well into the twentieth century as a portion of this flat land attached to our fifteen acre Low meadow was rented out during my childhood and the tenants crossed our land to reach these fields every time they brought and removed stock. It was a source of enjoyment to me as I had a chance to chat and play with the children accompanying their father, Chris Hagar, and eavesdrop on the conversation between my parents and the Hagar family. It was seen as a family outing for them and after the rush of sheep had passed down through the field tracks and begun to graze on their new grasslands the family came into the house to have tea and a bite to eat.

Some of the field names merely reflected their use or their position such as Far meadow, Low meadow, Cow pasture, The Brow (a hill-side meadow) and the Croft, the latter being the land immediately surrounding the farmhouse and farm buildings. The Brow always comes to mind when I see wild flowers growing in profusion. In Spring and Summer, until hay-making time, it was a place of real beauty. The large oak tree close to the entrance to the farmyard at the top of the Brow was one of my favourite places of play. It had many nooks and crannies around its ancient base where I played my imaginative games. I had ample opportunity to look out at the great variety of wild flowers; yellow rattle, dog daisies, ragged robin and meadow sweet. In the Spring there were pink and purple orchids and in a boggy corner the golden king cups.

The Brow led into long narrow field called Dowsill that joined the Low meadow, a boundary and an end to our land between the wood and river. Dowsill contained one of the two barns and cow byres or shippons on the farm. It was built much later than the farm buildings attached to the

farmhouse and was probably built as an addition to the farm by the estate workers of the Duke of Devonshire. Other tenanted farms in Barden have barns built in a similar and imposing style. Inside was a vast area for hay storage and below two tying-up areas for cattle. This was divided by a walk area known as the 'fothergang' where father walked to 'fother' or feed the cattle tied up for the Winter. It was never used as a shippon where the milking cows were taken. This was part of the barn attached to the farmhouse. Above the fothergang and byres there was a boarded hayloft. Outside in the walled yard there was an equally over-large stone trough but no piped water so it was never used and cattle had to be untied and taken over to the spring that bubbled up in the middle of Dowsill field.

I can see the daily Winter scene now as the cattle wear a path from barn to stream across the snow-covered field. Periodically around the yard there were square openings set high in the wall, presumably for throwing out soiled bedding and muck from the byre during the enforced confinement of cattle in Winter. This would fall and make piles against the outer wall ready for collection and spreading on the fields in Spring. Again I don't remember such use. I guess we never had enough confined cattle to make big muck-heaps and it was probably heaped in a corner within the yard walls.

The Croft, surrounding the farmhouse on two sides, was used for grazing of animals that needed an eye keeping on them. It had a Dutch barn with open sides where cut bracken was stacked as extra bedding for calves during their Winter stay indoors and for storage of farm machinery. Our very first car, an ancient bull-nosed Morris, was housed there too for the short time that it remained in working order. It was replaced by a couple of slightly less ancient Austins, a model ten and twelve. They were removed to a warmer place in the hay barn as by that time I had started school and the car of the time was required to start fairly promptly to get me into the school playground before the bell went. I perched on the edge of the slippery leather seat with my fingers crossed willing the engine to start. My father swung the starting handle and he occasionally lifted his head to yell, "Give her a bit more choke" and with a sinking feeling in my stomach I would pull out the choke on the dashboard. We were

probably going to be late again and I would have to enter the classroom with all eyes on me and receive a late mark in the register.

The Croft, being close to the house, was the earliest of my playgrounds. It had many damson, plum, apple and one cherry tree. It was always a race to collect the succulent crop of cherries before the birds ate them. The damsons were collected and made into jam every year. The big apple tree was my favourite place as it had a swing attached to it and I spent a lot of time enjoying its momentum. Fast and climbing high when life seemed exciting and slow and pendulum-like when my mood was calm and thoughtful. Behind the swing clumps of wild daffodils grew every Spring. A curved stone much like a small gravestone was close to the swing and caused me great puzzlement as it bore the letters B.C.C. carved into one side. It was revealed as a marker for water pipes laid for the collection of water from hillside springs which was fed into the two reservoirs constructed in Victorian times on Barden Moor; Low Dock and High Dock. I believe the letters stood for Bradford City Corporation as the growing city required extra sources of water. It provided a useful seat and was often used as a place to have your photograph taken.

Further up the hillside in the Croft was a large square of flat land with tall posts at each corner. In the Summer when big washes were undertaken, rope was slung between the posts and washing such as sheets and blankets pegged out to dry. I suspect this flattened area was used for games in Victorian and Edwardian times because one of my inherited postcards refers to a wild game of rounders played at Wood End in 1905.

Two tracks led across the Croft. The wide one for farm machinery and the occasional car or tractor led up to the road gate where milk churns were placed for collection every day. They were hoisted onto a long flat slab of stone on the wall top to enable the collector to transfer them more easily onto the lorry. The lorry took them all the way to the dairy in Kirkstall road, Leeds. This was very useful as my mother and I occasionally begged a lift into Leeds to do some special shopping usually around Christmas time. I have no recollection of how we got home again!

The other track was a well- worn path from the back yard up the hillside to a stone stile and out onto the road. By the side of this path a stream ran down the hill to disappear into a trough covered by an iron canopy where water was collected for the water pipes mentioned earlier and some re-emerged in the cattle trough in the bottom farm yard. This was the path taken by the family on journeys to and from our closest village of Burnsall. I dragged my feet up this path on my morning journey to school and raced down it in the afternoon! From the stile to the main farm gate onto the road the old stone wall leaned back to the road at a steep angle and the stones revealed at the base of the wall were thick with soft velvety moss. They made a wonderful seat to sit and look down on the farm or a place in the Winter to rest after pulling my heavy wooden sledge up the hill prior to hurtling down to the garden wall. The latter being a total figment of my imagination as my ancient sledge would never carry me that far! I pleaded most Christmases for a toboggan just like the shiny green and red painted beauty that my village school friend had. I enjoyed many rides on it down the field in front of her house and its raised and shiny runners carried me almost but not quite to the wall by the river. However, I didn't pester very long for a toboggan as my friend had an accident breaking her leg under those shiny runners. I never did achieve my ambition to own a real speed machine.

The field names were never written down and therefore the spelling of them is often guess-work on my part. I only heard them spoken of in the dialect used by my family. 'Brackendar' was the field closest to the moorland and had very little grass on it. It was covered mostly in bracken that we cut to act as extra bedding for the calves held in two buildings over Winter. The bracken was stored in the Dutch barn. Sheep sometimes grazed this field and our work-horse, Bobby, was put in there during the Spring. My lingering memory of him was his doleful face hanging over the back yard wall looking hopefully towards the kitchen window where someone might just look out and come with a tasty treat for him. Like all the farm animals he was disposed of at the farm sale when we left in 1954. Sadly, he was too old to make a good buy and was sent to the 'knackers' yard.

I also said goodbye to Bess our sheepdog when we left Wood End. She lived in an old beer barrel tipped on its side. It was positioned in the cart shed in the corner of the farmyard. This beer barrel kennel had once caused my parents great anguish. At the age of two I went missing and after searching everywhere they could think of they were just about to raise the alarm in the village. The barrel had already been inspected but knowing how fond I was of the sheepdog my father had one last look inside. I was found at the back of the big barrel. The dark interior and the sleeping sheepdog had kept me hidden. I was fast asleep curled up behind the dog with my thumb in my mouth as if I was sleeping in my own bed.

'Bumby' was a small field surrounded on three sides by the wood and although it was mown as a meadow every Summer it was not a good cropper. Docks or sorrel grew in abundance, their tall rusty red seed-heads waving above the sparse grass. Rabbit holes dotted the perimeter and I often collected their round green droppings to take home where they provided a liquid feed for young plants in Dads vegetable garden after they had soaked in the watering can for a week or two. Sheep droppings were also added to this manure brew. 'Bumby' corner was where the road curved sharply and threatened to turn over the car of an unwary motorist. The road had a steep camber and once off the road the car would face a roll down the hill into another of our fields known as the 'Hag'. Like the 'Brackenar' this field, although much larger, was composed mainly of bracken and grazed only by sheep. Unfortunately some young heifers once got into this field and were poisoned after eating the bracken. Their stomachs blown out with gas they were carted off in the 'knackers' van. It was a real blow to us losing these animals as we eked out a very poor living from the farm as it was and there was no nest-egg to tide us over such times.

At the bottom of the 'Hag' there was a gate through into one of the rented out fields and this gate also led to the fisheries. This was a place that fascinated me as a child and at the time I didn't fully understand its purpose. I wish now that I had been more of the kind of child who asked questions rather than a quiet listener and observer. Billy Moore visited the fisheries several times a week. Billy lived in my fathers' home village of Hebden a little further up the Dale. He rode his motorbike down the

grass track in the 'Hag' from the road at Bumby corner and saw to the needs of the young trout growing in the fishponds. They were in huge rectangular ponds covered with wire mesh to keep herons off them and after reaching a suitable size were transferred to the River Wharfe which formed the Eastern boundary of our land. They were caught by fishermen with a licence to fish from a particular stretch of the riverbank.

The 'Hag' was a different place in Winter, the bracken patches poking out from the glistening snow sheltering the bolt holes of hundreds of rabbits. It was in the 'Hag' that I first learned to recognise the tracks of rabbit, hare and the predatory fox. The tracks often ended in a patch of scuffed up snow where the fox had finally caught up with its prey. It was also the place where I was taught at a very young age to snare and to net rabbits. These were used to supplement our fairly simple but well-cooked food. My mother was an excellent cook and a great baker all her life. Snares were a cruel way of trapping rabbits as it took some time before they throttled themselves as they thrashed around to try and break free from the ever - tightening wire around their necks. Father set the wire traps along their runs gently pulling grass or bracken fronds over to hide them. For those not familiar with 'rabbiting', the trap consisted of a thin loop of wire that was held above the ground at rabbit height by a wooden peg driven into the ground. 'Netting' for rabbits was done with the help of a ferret. The ferret was kept in a wooden hutch near to the farm back yard. It became my job, as soon as I was old enough, to clean out its hutch. This was not a task I enjoyed as not all the ferrets we had were good to handle and I grew wise enough to cover my hands in an old pair of leather gauntlets to stop their sharp teeth from drawing blood. As if this was not enough, their soiled bedding was very smelly and I had to hold my breath whilst raking out the hutch. The ferret remained in a small wooden box next to the hutch until I had finished. The ferret was put down a rabbit hole and as many holes as possible around were covered with netting. I was set to watch over some holes and ordered to yell out if a rabbit bolted out of the hole and was caught in the net. My father would then run to the net and pull it tight over the struggling rabbit. He would then untangle the rabbit and pull hard on its neck to kill it. Strangely this event is one of my earliest memories, although I am well aware that childhood 'memories' are often the result of events being

related by family members a sufficient number of times for them to become your own memories. However, I can visualise this episode. I am stamping my little clogged feet and shouting "Kill it Daddy, kill it". I don't think I was a blood-thirsty child. It was merely a longing for the dreadful squealing of the rabbit to end. I never became accustomed to the sight and sound of pain of the creatures that featured in my childhood world at Wood End. I accepted that it literally didn't pay for a farmer to be squeamish. Needless to say I didn't grow up to be a farmers' wife.

CHAPTER 2 THE HOUSE

My life on a Dales hill farm during the 1940's, 50's and 60's was ruled very much by the Seasons of the year. The Winters for adults were hard but seen through the eyes of a child they were magical. On waking my eyes would see an increased whiteness in the white-washed bedroom ceiling and the usual farmyard sounds were muffled. Snow had fallen while I slept and I rushed from my bed to look out of the window hoping that there would be enough depth of snow to keep me away from school. Sometimes the small panes were covered in beautiful icy fern-like fronds made by 'Jack Frost' and I would have to breathe hard to melt a small patch so I could look out at the glistening landscape. I didn't linger too long in the bedroom as the only form of heating we had was the fire in the range in the big room known as the 'house'. My clothes were snatched up and I ran downstairs to dress in front of the fire. The fire was banked up high by my father each night before he came to bed and covered in ashes to stop it burning away. In the morning the still red heart of the fire was fed with kindling sticks until flames leapt up and coal gently added. The 'house' was a dismal place if the fire had gone out over night and re-lighting it caused many a temper to flare.

The 'house' being the only warm room in the farmhouse was the most lived-in room. The floor was stone-flagged and covered, in part, by rag rugs and cheap strips of bought hemp matting. Mother made the rag rugs during the long winter evenings. We sat together by the table as close to the oil lamp as possible. This being the only lighting we had until father purchased a small calor gas light that he attached to the roof beams. I cut old clothes into strips and mother prodded them through the sheet of sacking. This was usually an old animal feed sack that had been opened out and washed to serve as the work base for our rag rug. Recycling old clothes into rugs was a cheap method of carpeting cold stone floors. The rug could be multi-coloured with unsorted coloured strips or if strips were sorted and a pattern drawn on the sacking base the finished effect was quite artistic and pleasing to look at. Rug - making kits were bought from craft shops to make rugs for the wooden floors of the bedrooms or the sitting room. These were made in the same way but bought packs of cut wool were pushed through a meshed base that had a stamped pattern

indicating where different coloured wools were to be inserted. The strands of wool were much thinner than my cut strips of cloth and so wool rug-making was a much longer process than making a rag rug. I remember a wool rug intended for the sitting room was brought out over several years in an effort to complete it but I never saw its' pink roses on a grey background warming on the hearth. I think it was passed on to someone with more patience and determination to see its' completion.

Another occupation on the table by the light of the oil-lamp was entering the football pools results on fathers' coupon. Our newly purchased battery-powered 'Bush' radio rested on the table. I mistakenly thought I was helping father to win us lots of money. It was fathers little joke to give me an old coupon to make my noughts and crosses on. What I was listening to was not the football scores being read out but the shipping forecast. I must have been very young and the serious and measured tones of the announcers' voice sounded very similar to those of the football scores reporter. 'Lundy, Fastnet, Irish Sea, Shannon, Rockall' etc. were all mysterious words that could make us very rich so I pursed my lips and listened very carefully. I thought I must be doing it well because there were my parents exchanging smiles! The table was also a surface used weekly by mother to make bread, cakes, biscuits and pies. This table rather than the one in the kitchen being used as it was nearer to the oven in the range. The hot coals were raked from the fire across into the space under the oven and the days baking began. The dough for the bread was set to rise covered in a cloth by the fire whilst mother busied herself making pastry for fruit pies or rolling out biscuit mixture. Once risen the dough was shaped and some pressed into loaf tins and some had currants added and made into teacakes. This bread was a key part of our diet but to me mothers' malt loaves were the tastiest. These were a rich dark brown and full of fruit. I was also allowed to eat a spoonful of the malt extract. Seed cake, maids of honour, queen cakes, brandy snaps rolled out of that oven in the range before my hungry eyes. We also ate all our meals at this table. The butcher, Freddy Bower from Grassington, called once a week and a certain amount of meat was bought. After this was used up we had rabbit caught by my father or bacon cut from the cured 'sides' hanging from hooks on the kitchen roof. Bacon was not too bad a meal for me but other bits of the pig I thoroughly

disliked and they caused rows at the table when I refused them. My father enjoyed brawn, black puddings and pig cheek and insisted that I should try them too. I was stubborn and had to sit for long periods of time staring at my plate. Eventually father went back to work on the farm and after a while mother would relent and let me get down from the table.

It really wasn't surprising that I hated most pig meat as often the pig in question had been my pet pig before it grew up and was slaughtered in the back yard by the butcher. The 'runt' of the litter was given to me to look after and feed. One such piglet I called Percy and at first I kept him in a hay box next to the fire in the house and fed him from a bottle with a teat on the end. I also reared sickly or motherless lambs in the same way. Percy grew very well and became larger than his brothers and sisters. He was big and gentle and allowed me short rides on his back in return for a good old back scratch.

The visits of tradesmen including the butcher were looked upon as social events and involved cups of tea and lots of chatter. The butcher, Freddy, was my special friend as he always brought me a roll of comics that his customers had given him to wrap meat in. My parents had no money for non-essentials such as comics and so these visits were eagerly awaited. I read the adventures of 'The Secret Seven' in 'School Friend' and laughed at 'Desperate Dan' eating cow pies in 'The Beano'.

The grocer called once a week with our order of flour, sugar, tea, coffee, yeast, dried fruits, cheese and most important of all, paraffin for the lamp. Most other items were produced on the farm and were converted into tasty items to eat by my mother, a thrifty but excellent cook. He took away with him mothers order for the next week. The grocer, Gilbert Smith, came from the village two miles away and as was customary in those days he travelled to all the outlying farms in that part of Wharfedale.

The village shop in Burnsall provided for nearly all the needs of the inhabitants. It was the same shop that my mother worked in during the early years of the war and where my Grandfather was manager until his untimely death in 1944. It was opposite my Grandparents home in the

village and so was a constant source of entertainment. My second cousins, Jean and Muriel, still recall sitting on their Auntie Beatie's window seat in the 1930's when they were children watching all the comings and goings of shoppers, delivery vans and the postmen. The shop held the local post office as well as groceries, provisions and drapery items. I did exactly the same when I was a child in the 1950's but I was also free to roam into all parts of the shop. The grandson of the shop owner went to the village school and often stayed at the shop. We played together and were treated kindly by the shop assistants. I can smell the familiar shop smell of ground coffee mixed with the sweet smell of dried fruits from the large brass-handled drawers. These drawers were just the right height for two small children to pull out and stuff handfuls of fruit into their mouths before anyone spotted them! Next to the coffee grinder was the bacon slicer and this was always quite a frightening thing to watch in action. There was always the chance of a severed finger. We waited in vain.

At the rear of the shop there was a coal fire and sometimes the kind shop assistant would let us sit with her around the fire and drink a mug of cocoa. This was the only form of heating and the shop was very cold and draughty during the Winter months. The back door of the shop led into a yard where there was a big warehouse. In here were big flour bins amidst all the other items required to fill the farmhouse needs listed in the weekly order books. It was a scary place to play as it was known to harbour mice and even rats! We were encouraged not to mention this. I didn't see them as a problem as we had lots more at home on the farm.

In August the usual items were cleared from the two shop windows and were filled with items that every modern home should have. These items were prizes for the eventual winners of all the races and events in the annual Burnsall Feast Sports and Classic Fell Race. The races were for amateur athletes and therefore no money prizes could be given or accepted. There were picnic baskets, cut-glass bowls, tea-sets, sets of cutlery, silver teapots, pan sets, towels and bedding and many more items to attract our interest. I still have the cut glass bowl my mother won for winning the high jump in the 1930s. The centre of these sports was the village green where the children's races were held and some of the adult

competitions such as the tug of war, pillow fight, high jump and skittles. The road walk and cycle races started and finished in front of the Red Lion inn next to Burnsall bridge. The highlight of the day was the Fell race when runners raced up Burnsall Fell and tried not to fall and break an arm or a leg when racing down again to the finish by Burnsall green. The race was usually started by an invited 'celebrity'. This was often the Duke of Devonshire who came over from his hunting lodge, Bolton Hall, at nearby Bolton Abbey. A gun was fired and I remember being frightened by the loud 'Bang'. I went through a phase in my childhood when many things seemed to frighten me and loud noises was one of them. The start of the sports was signalled by a brass band marching from the village hall at the top of the village down to the village green followed by all the competing athletes. I would not go into the front garden of Grandmas house to see this procession pass by. I hated the loud 'Boom, Boom' of the drums and the way it made me feel queer inside but was unable to explain this to Grandma and the gathering of other family members.

Grandmas' home, Ivy Cottage, was full of visiting family and friends on Sports day. Several days beforehand she would be busy making jellies, blancmanges and trifles and these were carried down the steep stone steps into the larder. I remember being allowed to decorate these items with jellied fruits and 'hundreds and thousands'. Grandma was famous for her 'potted meat' and for her sponge cakes. These were the next things to be made ready for this annual feast. The potted meat would later fill sandwiches. The sandwich plate was replenished throughout the day as people dropped in for a cup of tea and a bite to eat. The gathered company would congratulate Grandma on her potted beef and marvel at the height of her golden yellow sponge cakes. The latter contained lots of eggs that she had whisked into a great frothy mass. Her upbringing on the farm had taught her never to skimp on eggs in cakes. There was never a shortage of eggs and the Victorian recipe books she used, including the famous 'Mrs Beaton's', encouraged the use of eight, ten and sometimes twelve eggs per cake.

On long Winter evenings a small baize-covered card table was set up in front of the range and Mother played card games, dominoes or draughts

with me until it was time to make that dreaded journey to bed. Many a game of 'Happy Families' was drawn out as long as possible by me until my father would look up from his newspaper and say 'Past your bedtime, pack those things away.'

Bedtime meant going through the dark passageway and up the stairs with my mother carrying the oil lamp to light our way. Once I was tucked into bed mother and the oil lamp returned to the house and I was left to gaze into the blackness around my bed and listen to the owls hooting outside and the noises made by our very old farmhouse. Other horrors of the dark often came before bedtime when I needed to visit our outside lavatory. My father did not allow my mother to accompany me with the oil lamp and it was too precious a thing for me to carry through the farmhouse and across the yard. Sometimes I was able to take my torch but often its' batteries were used up and I had to find my way in the darkness. This fear of the dark stayed with me until we moved to Winterburn Wood estate in 1954 and all the houses there had electricity and I was able to go happily to bed.

My little torch contributed to a very frightening experience. One night we returned in our car from a visit to Grandma Bowdins' house and saw a light in my bedroom. We thought a burglar was in the farmhouse and my father crept up the stairs while I waited fearfully with my mother in the hallway. My father was relieved to find our 'burglar' was my torch shining into the mirror on my dressing table. I had been playing with it before setting out to Grandmas and had left it switched on. My father was very angry with me but I think I had my own punishment as the incident just added to my night- time fears.

It is a wonder I didn't suffocate in my bed as I pulled the covers over my head rather than look into the dark and let my vivid imagination see and hear things during the long Winter nights. Summer bedtimes were not nearly as bad as then I could read my books borrowed from the travelling library van that stopped at our farm gate once a month. I could lean out of my window and watch my mother and father working in the vegetable garden.

My mother did try to make me feel less frightened of the dark. She told me that the man in the moon was watching over me and if I looked carefully I would see that he was smiling at me. I remember walking back from Burnsall village with her when there was a full moon. I looked up as we walked up the hill and through the wood and felt a little bit safer. Unfortunately, not all my nights were full moon nights.

Christmas 1949 was a special time in the house for me as it was my last Christmas before starting school. The little fir tree was placed at one end of the big sideboard that almost filled one end of the house. Above the sideboard the popular Victorian print of Landseers' 'Monarch of the Glen' hung in its heavy frame. Granny 'Beaties' box of old tree ornaments was brought out and I handled each one lovingly as it was unwrapped from the protective tissue paper. There were the pretty silvered glass birds with their long tail feathers, large and small glass balls and bells in bright colours and long shapes like pieces from a crystal chandelier. Every year I was torn between the little fairy in her frothy pink net dress and the very old Santa Claus with the miniature Christmas tree clutched in his arms. Which one should add the final touch to our tree and look down on us through the twelve days of Christmas? This year was to be different though as the final touch was the lighting of the little candles in their metal holders that mother had carefully clipped to the ends of the branches so that none touched the foliage or the precious ornaments. The whole room seemed illuminated by these little lights as they were reflected in the big mirror that was attached to the back of the long sideboard. This was a moment in time, my time. I was aware of happy feelings but also recognised it was the end of one stage of my life and the beginning of another and that felt a little bit scary.

Across the passageway from the 'house' was the sitting room. This was a much more comfortable room than the house but was not practicable for everyday use. It was also a reminder of family discord as it had been furnished and decorated for the use of my uncle and his new bride on his marriage in 1941. On their return from honeymoon his wife decided she didn't want to live at Wood End and so they went to live across the valley at Appletreewick and the would-be tenant farmer became a tractor driver for another farmer. My Grandparents were outraged by this turn of events

and so the new furnishings of the sitting room and also the main bedroom suite remained where they were, never to be used by the newly-weds.

The sitting room had a polished wood floor and had a carpet that nearly touched the skirting boards as was fashionable before fitted carpets. The linen chintz curtains brushed the floor and covered the window and also crossed the wall to cover the alcove that held the doorway. This was done to keep out the draughts that whistled from back door to front door of the old house. The fireplace was polished wood and the mirror above was part of the same unit. A row of pretty flowered tiles ran down each side. A comfy settee and two armchairs were drawn up to the fire. It was a very cosy room and I wondered why we hardly ever used this warm, welcoming room. The window looked out over the lawn and flower-beds but there was no window seat for me to kneel on as there was in the house and in my bedroom.

A little hallway led off the central passageway of the farmhouse and this was a very dark area as it had no window and relied on light filtering down the staircase that rose up from it or from rooms that led off the passageway if their doors were left open. Two old coat racks and hall-stands covered one wall and next to the bottom step of the stairs was the door to the 'tatey-hole'. This was the place under the stairs where our crop of potatoes was kept. Hopefully these would last us the best part of the Winter. It had a musty earthy smell and was the place I was threatened with if I misbehaved. Thankfully I was a reasonably well-behaved child and never had to be shut in this dark and scary place.

The passage ended in the kitchen. This was not really used as a living space in my time at the farm although in the warm summer months we did occasionally eat at the long wooden table. There was no range in the kitchen and as most of the cooking was done in the house so was the preparation and consuming of food. There was an old copper boiler in one corner next to the window. This window overlooked the 'house' yard as opposed to the 'farm' yard that was accessed by a flight of stone steps from the house yard. My mother never used the copper for boiling up her wash. There were just three of us living at the farm and so our few clothes were hand-washed in the Belfast sink under the window. This was a

fairly new addition to the kitchen and had replaced the old shallow stone sink. Mother did use the huge old wooden mangle to squeeze out the water from her wash but eventually that fell into disuse when she bought a small ringer with rubber rollers. The mangle stood at the top of stone steps that led down to the cellar. The cellar or larder had a small window near the ceiling letting in light from the yard above. The floor had stone flags and stone 'tables' supported by stone pillars. These 'tables' jutted out from two walls and we called them 'binks'. In my Grandmothers' time at the farm the milk from the cows was made into butter, cream and cheese in the cellar and kept cool on the bink tops. There was a reminder of these times that I was made to use. At the bottom of the cellar steps was a metal stand attached to the floor and the churn was clipped into it. My time was not as precious as my parents on the farm and so I was given the time consuming job of turning the handle of the churn and making either cream or butter.

Out of the dark inner hall the stairs led up to a half landing where a door led into a small bedroom that in the past was used by the farm hand. We had no extra help on the farm and so I used it as a playroom. It was a miserable sort of a room where the roof sloped steeply at one side and this left just enough room for the iron bedstead and a chest of drawers. It must have been extremely cold in Winter and even in my Summer use as a playroom the damp had crept into the drawers and prevented them closing. Mother stored her old school books in them and I particularly admired her needlework books that contained examples of needlework and embroidery stitches all beautifully stitched on small samples of cloth. The window overlooked the back farmyard and the pigsties. I was able to crawl out of the window and lower myself onto the roof of the pigsties and then walk along the dividing wall of the sties. A walk not to be undertaken if the sties were inhabited! I knew that not all pigs were gentle creatures like Percy my pet pig. I had been appalled to see how aggressive a mother pig could be in defence of her litter and yet just as easily turn on them and eat them!

The next flight of stairs led up to a large L - shaped landing and the only furniture here was a large chest we called the kist. I believe it was once used for storing items like flour that needed to be kept dry but later was

used for storing extra bedding. The lid was so heavy I was unable to lift it and I asked my mother to lift it to let me see what was inside. I was very inquisitive and hoped to see exciting things within. I was disappointed to see only a few uninteresting items stacked in one corner.

To the right of the kist was the door into the bathroom. This was once the fourth bedroom of the house but was changed in 1941 in readiness for my Uncle Denis and his new wife occupying the farm. It was really too big to hold just a bath, washbasin and cistern cupboard. I disliked bath nights in Winter as it was so cold undressing in such a big room. There was a music stool with castors on its feet that I rolled over to the washbasin and climbed onto when I washed myself and cleaned my teeth. The stool contained lots of sheet music that belonged to my mother that she had brought from her old home at Ivy cottage. I think it strange that there was no piano at Wood End as in my grandmothers' time it had been a house filled with music. The Sedgewick family from Woodhouse across the river regularly came to join in musical evenings.

The door to the left of the kist led into my bedroom. This room was over the 'house' where the fire burned day and night so if there was a room that could be described as warm then I suppose this was the one. It was a long rectangular room with a window facing out over the garden and a fantastic view down the river valley. In the Summer I enjoyed hanging out the window or sitting on the window seat long after I had been sent to bed. My parents were either still out in the fields or working in the vegetable garden. Once I had learnt to read I was able to use these light Summer evenings to read the story books I had chosen from the Travelling Library van that stopped at the top of the track down to Wood End. It came once a month and had its own peculiar smell as I climbed up the steps and knelt by the books reserved for children. It was a mixture of leather and disinfectant. Perhaps some books had been 'treated' as many children suffered the childhood diseases of chickenpox, measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever and there was still no immunisation against poliomyelitis or tuberculosis in the 1940's and 50's. I believe this early love of books led to a great deal of self-education on my part. My little world at Wood End expanded as I joined in the adventures of Arthur

Ransomes' 'Swallows and Amazons', Long John Silver of 'Treasure Island' and the exploits of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

The last room on the upper floor of the farmhouse before the stairwell led down to the ground floor was the bedroom occupied by my parents. It was similar to my room in that it faced over the garden and the river valley and had an identical seat under the window. It contained the only fireplace in the upper rooms and I can only think this was added much later in the houses' history. It was just inside the only door into the room and if it had been in frequent use anyone sitting in front of it would have been knocked over every time the door was opened. It was so badly positioned because it accessed the chimney breast that led up from the sitting room below. It was only ever lit when there was serious illness in the house and the patient, usually me, was moved into this room. The only person I remember sitting in front of a lit fire in this room is my Grandma Beatie. She heated the tin of kaolin used for poultices wrapped around the chest when I had a cough or she heated soup and made toast for me when I was on an invalid's diet.

CHAPTER 3. A FEW OF THE PEOPLE WHO KNEW WOOD END BEFORE ME.

Ada Thompson: At Burnsall church there is an unmarked grave beside the lichen-covered churchyard wall where Ada Thompson lies. The field over the wall slopes down to the river Wharfe where the peat-stained waters tumble and leap over pebble and boulder making a continuous melody. In life she was a rather sad figure and now I am the only one left who visits this spot. It is the only memorial to a very insignificant life. She had no home of her own. She died in 1951 at the age of seventy-one and for the best part of her life had been passed around the Thompson family like a rather unwanted parcel. I saw all this through the eyes of a child and on occasions I aped my elders and on at least one occasion my peers in their ill-treatment. Her position within the family was never explained to me and like many other only children I gathered what little information I had about her from watching, listening and storing pieces of information away. It was only through researching my family tree in the twenty first century that I discovered she was a cousin of my maternal grandmother, Beatrice Higgins nee Thompson. Her unsettled lifestyle continued until her untimely death, in which I played a part. Ada figures large in my memory because her passing was my first experience of death.

I was seven years old and as usual was having to eaves drop to gain information. I was at Grandma's house in the village when she was called to the phone in the shop across the road. I listened behind the door and realised it was about Ada and that the news was not good. I don't remember how the conversation went with Grandma afterwards but I do remember walking home to the farm and becoming more and more agitated by the news that Ada had died. Instead of following my usual route home I took a short cut across the fields so that I could get home to my mother to share the dreadful heartache.

I was not allowed to attend the funeral but of course knew all about it as the village school was right next to the churchyard and I had been sent to school as usual. However, my mother was sensitive to my feelings and I was allowed to place a bunch of violets on the grave a day or so later.

Ada was the daughter of my Great Grandfathers' brother, Thomas Thompson. He died in 1893 aged 42. His children were all still quite young and were shared out amongst other Thompson families. Ada and her brother Thomas came to Wood End to live with their Uncle Georges' family. The first record I have of her early life is told in the new communication rage of the early twentieth century, the post card. It was also considered the rage to collect them in albums and after my Grandmother died in 1965 I inherited an album and a box of postcards. In the box were some sent to Ada between 1902 and 1915 when she would have been in her mid to late teens. I presume they were either given to Grandmother for her collection or had been part of Ada's effects left in her room at Grandma's house when she died in 1951. They revealed that she had very strong links with the Thornton family living in Carleton, a village just outside the local town of Skipton. The 1901 census shows that after the death of Ada's father her mother married Frank Thornton of Carleton-in-Craven. The census also shows that Ada was living and working in Carleton at that time. She worked as a cotton winder in the local mill. Her sister, Lizzie, had married a local inn-keeper called Tom Bradley and during her late teens Ada left the mill and went to work for them at Lofthouse near Pateley Bridge in Nidderdale. The postcards show that she was also at the beck and call of members of the Thornton family. These postcards record that visits made by the Thorntons to the Thompson family home of Wood End. Tom and Lizzie moved to a public house in 1902 at Grassington. It was called the 'Black Horse' and they are shown with their family and servants standing outside the inn on one of Ada's postcards. They must have prospered here as the next photograph on a postcard shows Tom outside his new hotel, 'The Crown', at Lofthouse. In the photograph Tom is standing with workmen building an extension to the 'Crown'. He must have had a good head for business and seen that there was money to be made in the growing trend for well-to-do Edwardians to visit and take holidays in places of scenic beauty in the Dales. There were also the two huge new reservoirs of Angram and Scar House being built in the hills above Middlesmoor to cater for the water needs of the rising population of the city of Bradford. This meant an increase in trade from the influx of workers at the two sites. The working classes also enjoyed days out to

beauty spots like How Stean Gorge, Lofthouse and were carried there by train or charabanc. The building of the extension to the hotel in 1907 also coincided with the opening of the railway station at Lofthouse. The railway was built initially as a supply route for both building materials and workers. In Ada's collection is a postcard showing the station opening in 1907. Several of these hotel postcard photographs contain messages sent to Ada when she was residing at the Thornton home in Garden Terrace, Carleton looking after her mother. One of these was written by Tom in 1907 requesting Ada to return quickly to Lofthouse as she is needed there to help in the new business and to nurse Annie, his daughter, who has contracted mumps. It was probably during this time at 'The Crown' that she gave birth to her illegitimate child, Leonard Thompson. I have been unable to gain any information regarding the father of her child. The Thornton family helped to support her and the child. The postcards reveal that one of the Thorntons lived at number 22, Gisburn Street, Broughton Road, Skipton in 1908 and this was the house that Ada's son, Leonard, occupied when I first knew him in the 1950's.

There is a huge gap in my knowledge of her history after 1915 as no more postcards sent to her appear in the collection. She reappears in the Thompson family circle during the 1930's as housekeeper at Wood End. The information I have from that time is based on conversation with my own parents who worked at Wood End during World War 11. Previous to this she had kept house for a series of farm managers and labourers who carried on the farm during short periods of time when there were no other family members living at the farmhouse.

My mother and father had worked together on the farm during the war years with Ada acting as housekeeper. Mother was in the Land Army and her fiancée was stationed at R.A.F. St.Eval in Cornwall and as happened in many wartime relationships they grew apart. She broke off the engagement in 1944 and the working relationship with my father became a romantic one. Mother also had much need of a shoulder to cry on as her father had committed suicide early in 1944. He had married my Grandmother, Beatrice Thompson, in 1912 when she was living in the family home, Wood End. He bought a home for them in his home village of Embsay where they remained until 1920 when he bought Ivy cottage

in the main street of Burnsall, the closest village to Grandmother's old home at Wood End. He had served in France from 1914 to 1918 and the postcards from Grandmother's album reveal that she spent most of those years back at Wood End and not in her own home at Rock View Terrace, Embsay. Grandfather battled for almost all those years at Ivy cottage to hold his unhappy marriage together. Like many ex - soldiers he never talked of his years fighting in World War 1. I know he was injured and then had to return to the hell that was the Somme. Perhaps his war experiences and his marriage worries caused his depression that led to his suicide on a wild night when the river Wharfe was overflowing with rainwater rushing down the Dale. His body was found, several days after his disappearance, in the Wharfe near Barden bridge close to Barden Tower an old hunting lodge of the Cliffords of Skipton Castle.

The verdict was an open one but his close family realised he had chosen his own end. Mother had been very close to her father and his death must have hit her very hard. My Grandmother was not an affectionate mother and was incapable of giving comfort to my mother. The comfort came through a closer relationship with my father.

My earliest memory of Ada was when she shared my bedroom at Wood End. I must have been about four or five as I can remember the following occurrence very clearly. She slept on the big brass bedstead at one end of the room and I slept on an iron bedstead of the style that was popular in most hospitals at that time. I believe she had already started her nomadic existence and she was merely staying with us for a short time before moving on to stay with another member of the family. There was no indoor sanitation at the farm and so there was a china 'po' under the bed for night and early morning use. It was a beautiful Summer's morning and the estate worker employed by the Duke of Devonshire to paint the woodwork on his tenants' farms thought he would make an early start on the front of the farmhouse. Unfortunately Ada, being fairly deaf, had not heard the noise his ladders made as he placed them under our bedroom window. I tried to warn her as she got out of bed and hoisted her night- dress ready to sit on the po. She lowered herself onto the po and ignored my gesturing towards the window. The bearded face of the painter appeared at the window and in her attempts to stand up and pull

down her night-clothes she tipped the pot over. Amid her screams came oaths from below as the contents had filtered through the floorboards and were dripping onto the table where my father was beginning his breakfast. There was an old but fairly threadbare carpet and it had not been enough to absorb the sudden deluge!

Situated on one long wall of the room was the only item of furniture owned by Ada. It was a pretty satinwood ladies writing desk. Mother said I was a great one for rummaging, as she called it, and Ada's desk was often rummaged through when she went off to stay with other members of the family. It revealed very little of real interest or value. I remember only four items that I took out regularly and examined. A pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, a bottle of scent, a bottle of green ink and a pack of playing cards. The cards had a coloured picture of a bunch of flowers on their reverse side and the pack is the only one of the above items that I have in my possession. I believe all the items were emptied out when Ada's son claimed the desk after her death. I can still smell the scent, which was a brilliant shade of green, just like the ink in the bottle. It purported to be 'Essence of Devon Violets' but had been in the bottle for too many years and I wasn't tempted dab any behind my ears!

I have a shameful memory of my time with Ada at Wood End. I still feel sick to my stomach that I was so easily influenced by the behaviour of another child. My Uncle and his daughter were visiting the farm. This was a rare occurrence as my mother and her brother did not get on very well so having time to spend with my cousin was quite a novelty for me. Ada was staying with us at the farm and took my cousin and me for a walk in the woods. My cousin was two years older than me and soon took the lead in making up games for us to play as we rambled along the woodland track. It must have been during the Summer months as the undergrowth was quite high and we were soon playing hide and seek away from the main track where Ada was collecting small branches and twigs to aid fire-lighting in the farmhouse. It was at my cousin's suggestion that we 'stalked' Ada as she walked on the track above us. At some point we began to throw small stones towards her. I was aware that this was wrong. Ada was someone who cared for me and I would never have thought of doing such a thing if I hadn't been egged on by my

cousin. Eventually a larger stone hit Ada and she cried out. I, coward that I was, ran away with my cousin. As if this was not bad enough I joined in my cousins shouting of " Umpa, Umpa stick it up your jumper!" This was aping our 'elders and betters' who often addressed her as Umpa when greeting her in a jocular fashion. It was however a cruel jest as Ada had been born with a hump on her spine and this had become more obvious as she walked with a stoop in old age. I hope I had my legs smacked and was sent to bed for this behaviour but cannot remember being punished. I was not a naughty child and such chastisement happened rarely but when necessary my mother would chase me up the stairs to bed smacking my legs all the way.

I came in contact with Ada again when she was staying with my Grandmother in the village. She was treated no better there. I soon picked up on my Grandmother's unfriendly attitude towards her and saw that she viewed Ada's staying with her as a reluctant fulfilling of her duty towards a family member. I remember Ada spent a lot of time playing 'Patience' at the large square table covered in the plum- coloured chenille cloth. The one I pulled down at one side to allow me to play 'house' under the table. She would sometimes put away her playing cards and play at 'Snap'. We used a pack of lovely old Victorian cards that had belonged to my Grandmother as a child and showed their great use by the finger-marks and the occasional missing corners. Her eyesight was very poor so I usually won our game. Grandmother's house was opposite the shop in Burnsall village and so Ada was able to obtain her favourite magazine to read. It was called 'Peoples' Friend'. She would sit close to the range, which had been set in the old ingle nook fireplace, bending over trying to read the magazine through the very thick lenses of her glasses. I don't suppose any one thought of taking her to an optician to check her eyesight and so she probably didn't see very clearly. This poor vision may also have played a part in her final end. My involvement is all too clear to me but this was never discussed with either my parents or my Grandmother.

Ada was staying with my Grandmother. Grandmother usually walked me home after school ended in the afternoon. Ada took her place that fateful afternoon. We had just left Grandmas cottage letting the gate clatter back

into place and I skipped on the footpath ahead of Ada. Traffic through the village was not very heavy at the beginning of the fifties. I suppose for a small Dales village it was a peak time with the 4 o'clock bus to Ilkley, school taxis and the odd parent collecting children by car adding to the usual farm vehicles passing through the village. It was the rule that I should stop when I came to the end of the pavement before crossing the road with Grandma. The devil was in me that day and I was teasing Ada by running very quickly to the end of the pavement. She must have thought I wasn't going to stop and look or wait for her to cross. She gave chase calling "Cum 'ere ya little besom !" as she often did when I didn't respond quickly enough to her requests. I remember turning to laugh and then hearing her cry out as she fell. She had slipped and fallen heavily, half in the road and half on the pavement. Her hip had taken her weight as she fell sideways. She was carried on a stretcher, brought from I don't know where, and placed on the floor in the hall passage of Grandmas house to wait for an ambulance. She cried out in pain many times and was made to sip a cup of tea. The answer to all forms of crisis!

Ada's accident, which brought about her death, became my first experience of the death of someone dear to me. She sustained a broken hip in the fall and died in Bradford Infirmary a week or so later.

Many authors writing of childhood see the first experience of death as an end to our innocent and often dream-like passage through early childhood. Every day is fresh and new and we hoard sights, sounds and experiences in the memory to be brought out and brushed down like new, year after year of our adult lives. I just wish that all of Ada's life could have been a happy memory. She deserved better treatment but for all the bad treatment she still retained the ability to smile at peoples jibes. I have examined my memories of her and I have found a good-hearted and kindly lady. A happy memory from her 'little besom'

My Grandmother Beatrice Thompson and her family.

Beatie was born at Wood End in 1887. She was the first child of George and Jane Thompson. They had married late in life. Jane Peacock being 36 and George 46 respectively when Beatie was born. Beaties' wider

family was made up of many aunts, uncles and cousins as her father George had six siblings. Georges' father, Thomas, had originally farmed in Timble, a hamlet not far from Blubberhouses on the main Bolton Abbey to Harrogate road. All seven of his children were born there and christened at Fewston church. Sometime after the birth of Mary Ann, the youngest child, in 1850 George took his family back to his old home, Wood End farm. He was to run the farm for his ageing father, Thomas, who held the tenancy. The farm was part of the estate of the Duke of Devonshire of Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. The Dukes residence in Yorkshire being Bolton Hall which lies close to the remains of the old Cistercian monastery of Bolton Abbey. The Hall has been used as a shooting lodge as a large part of the Dukes Bolton Abbey estate is made up of moor land managed by gamekeepers and stocked with grouse for the shooting season. The Dukes family, the Cavendishes, have held these estates since 1748. They came through the marriage of Lady Elizabeth Clifford the only surviving child and heiress of Lord Clifford of Skipton Castle. The Clifford family of Skipton castle are perhaps best known for their participation in the Wars of the Roses, the battle for the English crown by the House of York and the House of Lancaster. Skipton or 'Sheeptown' is approximately six miles away. It is a market town, often referred to as the 'Gateway to the Dales'. Lady Elizabeth married in 1635 Richard Boyle, second Earl of Cork and first Earl of Burlington. The Boyle family terminated in the heiress, Charlotte Elizabeth, the only surviving daughter of Richard and Elizabeth who married William Cavendish, fourth Duke of Devonshire in 1748 with whose descendants the Bolton Abbey estates still remain.

Beaties father, George, took over the tenancy of Wood End after the death of his father, Thomas in 1873. His mother Mary died in 1882. George married his housekeeper, Jane Peacock, at the Priory Church of Bolton Abbey in 1886 and Beatie was born a year later. Another daughter, Marion, was born in 1889 but died at three weeks. A son, George, was born in 1890. Beatie and George both attended Burnsall School. I have an old photograph of my Grandma Beatie with the rest of the school pupils taken around 1897. In the photograph the headmaster, Mr Turner, stands next to his pupils in long frock coat and bowler hat.

Burnsall School was founded in 1602 by Sir William Craven, a former Lord Mayor of London. It was to be a grammar school for boys who boarded in the dormitories above the one large classroom. The building changed little in the years that followed and only saw structural changes in the late twentieth century and again in 2003 when extra classrooms were added at the rear. The front remains the same and would be instantly recognisable to its famous benefactor and founder after 400 years.

Wood End at this time was far from being a quiet farmhouse for Beatie and her brother to grow up in. There were occasions when it must have been almost bursting at the seams with other family members, paying guests, family friends, farm lads and Irish itinerant workers. The latter were known as 'paddies' and came to help at hay time. The 'paddies' slept in the loft above the back kitchen and had to climb a ladder to reach the entrance door. They left behind souvenirs of their stay in the form of hundreds of old 'pop' bottles with the glass marble stoppers inside. A mini- mountain of these was still in the loft in the 1950's when I lived at Wood End. The paddies were replaced during World War 11 by German prisoners of war who were brought out daily from the camp in the nearest town of Skipton. As happened in many other cases, one of these named Helmut did not return to Germany at the end of the war choosing to remain in the Dales where he married a local girl and found work in a nearby lime quarry.

Three young cousins also lived at Wood End with George's family during the last years of Queen Victoria's reign and the early Edwardian period. I believe one of them was an orphan called Polly Robinson and the other two were Ada and Thomas Thompson. Ada lived at Wood End for short periods during my early life there. Other family members and friends came to visit and to stay frequently as revealed in the postcards written to Beatie, her mother and to Ada during those years. It was obviously a welcoming place as all write enthusiastically of the enjoyable times they have had and how much they are looking forward to the next time. Several of them mention how good the home-made butter was that they had taken away with them from Wood End. The churn in the cellar was still in use for cream making and butter making in my years at the farm.

However I did not relish the 'churning' as it was usually me who was left to turn the handle until my young arms were weary and aching.

My Great Grandmother, Jane Thompson, also took in paying guests, mainly painters who came to paint the romantic landscape surrounding Bolton Abbey and Barden Towers. One such painter, John Dilworth Harrison, wrote postcards to Beatie from other parts of the country and also during his stay in a sanatorium in Painswick, Gloucestershire whilst undergoing open-air treatment for tuberculosis. He was obviously quite fond of her as he ended his messages by writing 'Respectfully' and 'Affectionately Yours'. She was undoubtedly an attractive young woman and his cards were not the only ones signed in this way.

Sadly it was probably during these years that she was made too much of and this marred her character. Her parents spoiled her. She was treated as a 'lady' and not as the daughter of a fairly lowly tenant farmer. She gained notoriety for the wearing of splendid hats. She had her own piano tutor in Ilkley, a Mrs Grunwell. She often stayed with the Grunwells in Ilkley and wrote rather imperious sounding postcards to her mother when she wished to return. She demanded that her brother George be sent with the horse and cart to meet the train at Bolton Abbey to carry her home to Wood End. The Victorians and Edwardians liking for musical evenings as entertainment meant that her talents were much in demand both at Wood End and at other farmhouses in the area. She often played duets with a Miss Demaine and their names were included on a printed leaflet advertising a musical evening at the schoolhouse at Barden. Transport to such events and dances were either by horse and trap, 'shanks pony' (on foot) or by bicycle. People travelled long distances to social events and as Beatie's postcards reveal they either slept in the schoolroom, a nearby farmhouse or walked many miles home often not reaching there until dawn.

Beatie had several good friends and her best friend lived at the 'Red Lion' inn by Burnsall Bridge. She was called Annie Hudson and in 1909 she married a Mr Shackleton of Bradford. The occasion was marked by the giving of a cup or a mug to all the children at the village school. This was provided by the groom's father. Annie already had some standing in

the village as the daughter of the village innkeeper but this presentation obviously proclaimed that there had been a good match made with a man of some substance.

Annie remained a good friend of Beatie until well into the 1940's. Beatie often ran away from her home at Ivy cottage during the thirty-three years of her marriage and Annie's home became one of her bolt holes. She found that she could not cope with being a wife and mother and so took little unannounced 'respite' breaks with friends and family members. These were often traumatic times for her husband Frank and her two young children. Kind neighbours watched over them whilst he searched for her. In those days when not everyone had a phone and car this could not have been an easy task. The cache of post cards reveals one sent to my mother, Kathleen, whilst she was staying with a neighbour during one of these episodes. It was from Frank assuring his daughter that her mother was well and would be returning with him very soon.

I believe incidents that occurred in 1920 may have had some bearing on Beaties apparent inability to cope with life as a wife and a mother. In that year she and Frank moved from their first home in Embsay to Ivy Cottage Burnsall and her mother became ill and subsequently died. Beatie was expecting her third child and having to cope with two others both under three years old. The third child, Sarah, died after ten days and the coroner recorded at the inquest that death was due to accidental smothering by bedclothes. I feel all these events occurring in one year were enough to affect her mental state. I remember in her later years she often told me that she slept badly and that her nerves were bad. There were no counsellors in those days and so her problems were not addressed and were hidden in the terminology of "I'm bad with my nerves".

My mother and her brother Denis grew up but not as a result of good mothering. The parental bond between mother and child was never there for either of them. Although it is obvious from postcards sent to Frank from Beatie during the First World War that she enjoyed being a new mother to Denis in 1917. My mother survived several serious illnesses in childhood so she must have received some nursing care from Beatie. She spoke of her mother as being neglectful and sometimes having a

cruel streak. She remembered that her long hair was roughly brushed and plaited so tightly that her skin was pulled taut around the forehead. Any complaints brought a smack on the head from the back of the hairbrush. I hope this did not happen too often and that it was merely a symptom of Beatie being "bad with her nerves".

Her rather odd behaviour continued into her children's adult life. She resented their attempts to make their own lives. Perhaps this attitude came from her upbringing at Wood End when the house was always full of family and friends. She remained at home as many girls did during that period and her brother George remained to help run the farm. My mother wished to go to teacher training college in London in the late 1930's but her mother would not allow her to go. She said daughters should remain at home and look after their parents. My Grandfather would not stand up to her in spite of my mothers pleading and it was agreed she would stay at home and work in the village shop where her father was manager.

The outbreak of World War 2 brought changes and as the war years continued mother was required to do some kind of war work. She still did not escape but merely moved from her parent's home into her mother's old home at Wood End. Grandad Higgins held the tenancy of the farm after Beatie's brother, his wife and family had moved to another farm on the Duke of Devonshire's Bolton Abbey Estate. It had been the intention that Beatie's son Denis would live at the farm after his marriage in 1942 but his wife disliked the idea of living at an isolated farm and they moved away after only a few weeks at the farm. Grandma Beatie did not want him to marry and apparently refused to attend his wedding. She was only present at the reception because family members went to the house and cajoled her into attending.

Mother became part of the Women's Land Army and lived and worked on the farm with Ada Thompson as housekeeper and a farm man, Henry Bowdin. German prisoners of war were also brought out from the prison camp at Skipton to help keep the farm going and assist in the growing of extra crops for the war effort. My mother married in 1944 and once again Beatie refused to have anything to do with the wedding and went so far

as to hide the camera mother had put ready to take to the church. There are no photographs of my parents wedding and I feel sad that Beatie was capable of this spiteful act. I came to know her well during the close relationship that we had until her death in 1965 and although I had a very strong bond with her I acknowledge that when the mood was on her she could stir up trouble. She had to have her own way and if crossed she could be as spiteful as a spoilt child.

Muriel and Jean Thompson.

Beatie's brother George took over the tenancy of Wood End after his fathers death in 1917. He married Annie Spencer in 1924. Their daughters, Muriel and Jean, were both born at Wood End and lived there until the mid 1930's. Jean married John Marshall and her sister Muriel became Mrs Leslie Clarke. They both have fond memories of their Auntie Beatie. They enjoyed their childhood visits to her home at Ivy Cottage, Burnsall and recall the novelty of sitting in the window seat of her front room watching the comings and goings at the shop across the road.

The shop no longer exists but before car ownership became a regular thing for families it was relied upon to provide most of the needs of the villagers and the outlying farms. My Grandfather was the shop manager for twenty four years and my mother also worked there just before World War 2. She never lost the art of packing items speedily and neatly in wrapping paper. Sugar, dried fruits, tea and coffee were all packed in blue, purple, beige or brown wrapping paper. A flat sheet was expertly folded to make a container. Sometimes string was used to tie a flat parcel but upright packs were sealed with nothing but a few interlocking folds. The shop, its customers, its workers and its contents were as much a fascination for Jean and Muriel as they were for me in later years.

Wood End farm is quite isolated and daily life was pretty repetitious so any interruption in routine was well remembered. One visitor who appeared once or twice a year at Wood End during their childhood was Duncan the tramp. He came to the back kitchen door asking for a pot of tea and bit of bread. Muriel recalls a visit he made when she was about two and a half. She and her sister clung onto their mother's apron and

peered up at the roadster. He had dirty grey hair that reached halfway down his back. His face, hands and clothes never washed by anything other than falling rain. His visits followed the same pattern with their mother offering Duncan a sandwich, tea and a bed for the night in the barn. This was after he had relinquished his tobacco, his pipe and most importantly, his matches!

A favourite place for the sisters to play was under the lilac tree by the garden gate and Muriel remembers the Duke's Head Gamekeeper visiting the farm and seeing them playing as he entered the garden gate. He said he thought he had found two fairies living at Wood End. I can well understand his likening of them to fairies as both sisters were very pretty children with fair hair. They enjoyed having picnics under the tree and shared these with their cousin, Esther, on her visits. On one visit they were enjoying banana sandwiches when a strange dog leapt into the garden and they all ran towards the house for mother to save them. Unfortunately big sister Jean caught her foot in the drain close to the front door and the other two fell over her. Muriel was first up hurtling in to get Mother to save them all! Muriel is now in her eighties but remembers the day very well and the smell of the lilac that hung in the warm summer air.

Their father George told them about their Grandmother, Jane Thompson. She had a different attitude to tramps. Unlike their mother she disliked them and employed a drastic method to dissuade them from visiting. She loaded up a shotgun and from an upstairs bedroom window she watched them coming down the farm track. If they didn't turn after her shouted warning she would fire over their heads to speed them on their way. George worried that one day she may hit one of the tramps and so he took her gun and secretly buried it. I remember my Grandmother telling me when I was a little girl that there was a gun buried behind the Dowsill Low barn. I don't recall her telling me the rest of the story. However, I remember casting around behind the barn wondering which little piece of uneven turf held the secret of the buried gun.

Muriel remembers the simple pleasures she had as a child living at Wood End. Christmas was always a special time and although the old house no

longer echoed with the sound of the home made music of piano and violin as in her fathers and my Grandmothers youth it had music on Christmas morning. Her father placed the wind-up gramophone at the foot of the stairs and the sound of 'Christians Awake' and other Christmas favourites brought her and her sister Jean rushing from their beds.

The old house has witnessed many changes down the years and has probably witnessed far more since electricity lit up its dark corners in the late fifties. I hope that Wood End, for the children growing up there in the twenty first century, will be as much a special place as it has been for so many children in years gone by. A new wood has been planted above the farmhouse and in their lifetime a wood will once again shelter Wood End. They too will listen in their beds to the wind moving through the branches and the hoot of owls flitting over the tree tops but if they should be scared of the sounds in the dark they can switch on the light!

CHAPTER 4 BEATIE AND ME

Beatie came into my life a little later than most Grandmothers. She had not wanted my mother to marry at all. The rift between her and my mother continued for quite a long time after my mother's marriage and was only healed by me, her grandchild.

Grandma did not want to see or have anything to do with me during my first and second year of life. It wasn't until my father had a bad motorcycle accident and had a long stay in hospital that she decided to recognise me as her grandchild and take some responsibility for my care. Mother could not stay at Wood End and run the farm single-handed. She removed to my father's own village and lived in a cottage owned by his Auntie Mary. Auntie Mary owned several cottages in the village of Hebden and these were often used by members of the large Bowdin family as temporary accommodation in times of need. A manager and farm man were hired to run Wood End farm at this time. My mother returned to work at the village shop in Burnsall during the months when my father was in hospital. This meant a daily walk of over two miles for mother and me from our cottage in Hebden. The walk is one of my earliest memories. We had to cross over the river Wharfe via the swing bridge. This was very springy and wobbly and if you looked down at the water the whole bridge appeared to be moving. This effect made me feel sick and frightened. I was encouraged by mother to hurry along or she would be late for work. I had no sooner got over this hurdle than the next one arrived. On fine sunny days we would continue along the riverside to Burnsall, a lovely walk enjoyed by countless visitors to the area. However the path was too muddy in wet weather and so we would climb the long flight of steps just beyond the swing bridge and follow the narrow little path known as Postman's walk and then continue along the main road. The steps are steep and quite wide apart and my little legs found them difficult to climb. My anxiety was increased by my mother rushing ahead and encouraging me to hurry along.

There is no real explanation why in later years I connected the saying of the Lords Prayer with this flight of steps. They always flitted into my mind as we said the prayer as part of our daily act of worship at school.

School was several years ahead and the happy part of my day was still to come. Grandma Beatie was waiting in her cottage opposite the shop to look after me for the day. Gently bubbling in a pan was my reward for this daily rush. It was Grandmas oatmeal porridge ready for me to eat with a spoonful of golden syrup and cream poured around the edge of the bowl. My mother had probably fed me some breakfast before our walk but Grandma insisted porridge was best!

Grandmothers nursing skills were rather old-fashioned but I was expected to accept them gracefully. She bought liquorice root and hard blocks of liquorice. I had to suck the root and chew small pieces of hard liquorice that she broke off the lump with her rolling pin. They were given to ensure good bowel movement. A treacle-covered spoon was dipped in brimstone and administered as a blood tonic in the Spring. My mother was exasperated by these unnecessary medicines but must have decided they were harmless enough and they continued until the late 1950's by which time I was old enough to forcefully refuse them. Kaolin was heated in the tin in a saucepan and spread on an old scrap of material rolled up and placed on your chest if you had a chesty cold. I remember mother and me receiving this treatment when Beatie was in charge of the house at Wood End during a flu epidemic in the 1950's. The poultice was too hot and I got a blistered chest. She also believed in a drop of Wine Tonic and gave me a glass when I visited her She believed it was good for your blood but overlooked the fact that it contained alcohol. She had a big sulk when I finally refused to join her in any more drops of tonic.

Our relationship blossomed out of necessity and I became her favourite grandchild. On our return to the farm after my father's recovery from his accident Grandma called in to see me on her daily walk to collect sticks for her fire from the wood and to take home a few eggs from the farm. During my school years she walked home with me and it was from her that I learned all the common names of the wild flowers along the roadside and in the woods and fields surrounding my home Wood End. The relationship between my parents and Grandmother was not easy and there was never a good atmosphere when she came to call. My father always referred to her as 'the Duchess' and I found this hard to understand. It was only in later years that I realised this nickname was

given her because she was always interfering and criticising my parents running of the farm. This attitude meant that in later years she would lose her connection with Wood End altogether. It must have been heartbreaking for her, as she had the same love of the place as the love that brought me to set down these memories.

CHAPTER 5 VISITORS TO WOOD END

The moldy warp man didn't come too often to the farm. We didn't look forward to his visits as that meant we had serious problems with moles on the farm. I think his name was Billy Banks and he was employed by the Estate Manager to go round estate properties dealing with moles and all kinds of pests and vermin. He was round of face and round of girth. He had clogs on his feet and wore leather leg protectors from ankle to knee. He used to say his trousers were made of moleskins but I suspect this was said in jest. His trousers did have a smell of damp earth about them as his occupation brought him in close contact with the earth.

Bert Reynard was the Council roadman who lived in the village of Appletreewick across the river Wharfe from Wood End. He spent his days following a circuit from his home along the road one side of the river crossing over Barden Bridge and up the other side before crossing over Burnsall Bridge and so back to his home. Our farm lay between Barden and Burnsall and whenever he was passing he came down to the farmhouse to have his dinner and a mug of tea with us. He had his own sandwiches in a tin box and a mug containing tea and sugar that he gave to my mother to fill with boiling water from the kettle. Mother usually provided the milk for his tea but he also carried a bottle of milk with him. He liked to be independent and provide his own food and drink. All he needed to clean the road sides, clear the drains or cut back overhanging tree branches was tied to his bicycle that he pushed along the roads. He wasn't a great talker but showed his affection for me by bringing me a bar of dark chocolate whenever he came to visit. At the time of his death in the 1960's my family had left Wood End farm but I still came back to visit Grandma at Ivy Cottage, Burnsall. When I went to visit his grave in Burnsall churchyard I was puzzled to find the inscription on his gravestone written on the opposite side to all the others in the graveyard. I wondered if I had imagined this but confirmed this on a more recent visit.

I didn't welcome the visits of the pig swill man. He was called Dick Darwin and lived at Skirethorns near Grassingto. He came to collect an old dustbin that mother had thrown food waste into and took it back to

his pig farm along with all the others he had collected from the farms around. I think this must have been at the times when we had no pig of our own to fatten. The regulations regarding animals raised for food and the possible spread of disease no longer allows such collections of food waste for animal consumption.

Another visitor who came and stayed for the usual cup of tea was the lady who delivered our Sunday newspaper. I don't remember having daily papers but remember we had Sunday papers delivered by a lady from the village of Addingham further down the Wharfe valley. She travelled to the local farms delivering papers in her old Jowett van. I was fascinated by the way she chain-smoked her cigarettes. Her first and second fingers were stained dark orange by this habit and the front of her grey hair was sulphur yellow.

We also had unwelcome visitors. I remember being very frightened by the visit of a Sikh salesman. He came to the back door and placed his foot on the doorstep so that my mother couldn't close the door. We couldn't afford to buy any of his cheap merchandise but he was determined to sell something before he went away. My mother told me to run and get my father. This was all a ruse as she knew father was out in the fields and would be hard to find. This did not deter the salesman and in order to get rid of him she bought me a cheap little blouse. It didn't hold together through very many washes. Tramps had once scared my Great Grandma Jane Thompson and this Sikh with his orange turban and dark skin coming to our isolated farmhouse gave me a fright to remember. My second cousin Jean Marshall nee Thompson also remembers Sikh salesman touring the farmhouses just after the Second World War.

We also had a tailor from Bradford who came around the farms seeking business in the post war years. He came and measured my father for a new jacket. I don't think it was a very good fit because I remember an argument took place when father refused to pay for less than perfect goods.

We didn't have too many visitors who came to stay in the farmhouse. Grandma Beatie came when my mother was ill and my father's two brothers, Tom and Alec, came to help at hay time. Tom slept with my father and mother shared my bed. This was a treat for me as I wasn't frightened of the dark with mother beside me and she brought the oil lamp to light up the dark corners of the room. The window was left open on those hot Summer nights and unfortunately the lamplight attracted moths and beetles. They flew in through the open window and I watched anxiously in case they descended on my side of the bed. My father had troubles of his own in the bedroom next door. Uncle Tom arrived with no change of socks and to freshen them up he placed them on the ledge of the open window each night. The smell of these sweaty socks upset my father and he hurled them onto the lawn below. Tom was also upset when he found his socks wet from the morning dew.

Uncle Alec and Auntie Mona occupied my bed when they visited. I was glad to have their company as this meant I shared my parent's bed. I could go happily to bed as I knew I would have company through the dark night. My fear of the dark had led to me leaving my own bed and scurrying into my parent's bed. This happened once too often and my father was angry when he found me next to mother in the morning. A small latch was placed on the outside of my bedroom door and was used to keep me in my room at night. It wasn't used for very long as I remember having a fit of hysterics at the thought of being locked in my room. I promised to keep to my own room and the latch was never used again.

I never thought of myself as a lonely child during my childhood but one set of visitors who came once a year made me wish for some company. The first sight of them was a big green van appearing on the roadside above the farm. The Scouts from Bradford were here again! My father let them set up camp every year in the little triangular field next to Low barn in Dowsill pasture. There was a little stream running through where bright yellow Marsh marigolds or Kingcups grew in profusion in the Spring. The Scouts could get the water they needed or if it was dry they could go to the river below the barn. The Scouts poured out of the back of the van and then a chosen few emerged pulling big handcarts laden

with tents, pots and pans and their food rations for the week. The carts were carefully manoeuvred down the farm track, through the farm yard and down the steep hillside of the Brow to the Low barn. The tents were set up in a semicircle and large flat stones from the riverbed placed in a circle away from the tents. These acted as a surround for the fire that would be built there to cook their food. Metal poles were driven into the ground for the cooking pots to hang on and the scouts dispersed to collect firewood from Gelgoam wood behind the campsite. A band of unlucky scouts remained behind to dig a latrine pit and erect a canvass surround. Towards evening a few scouts appeared in the farmyard with cans ready to be filled with milk from the evening milking session. Others came to the back door of the farmhouse to collect eggs from my mother. After breakfast they marched up from the campsite to the road where they either set off in the van for a days outing or they walked along the road disappearing to an unknown destination. This was my chance to go down to the camp and look around. If 'curiosity killed the cat' I would have died in my childhood. My parents had forbidden me to visit the site and definitely not when the scouts were around. It all seemed so exciting to me. I had heard them singing around the campfire in the evening and had looked at the rafts they had built and the swings that hung out over the river. On one occasion they had constructed a rope and pulley system that meant they could hurtle over the river to the other side. Crossing the river was something I had always wanted to do as I longed to investigate the Romany caravan that was positioned on the riverbank where the river curved below Low barn. This painted caravan was a holiday home and I occasionally spotted children playing around it in the summer months. I had often thought how nice it would be to get to know these children and maybe get to see inside their caravan. The river was too deep to think of crossing on foot and although the children sometimes waved to me I never got to share their holiday playground.

During my childhood years I was usually far too busy enjoying the everyday happenings on the farm to even think about loneliness. I fed orphan lambs from a bottle, went down to the village blacksmiths when Bobby's horseshoes needed to be changed and followed our flock of sheep when they were turned out onto the moor. I drove them along the road to Drebley to our neighbour's farm at dipping time to be pushed

into a pit of foul smelling disinfectant and rolled up their fleeces after father had cut them off with a hand held pair of shears. These days the same shears hang in my garden shed and are used for trimming shrubs or lawn edging. If I wasn't helping with farm tasks I was roaming through the woods and fields enjoying every corner of my special playground. Visitors to the farm were merely pleasant interruptions during those years that were filled with the excitement of being alive. Alison Utley, the author of 'The Country Child' was exactly right when she commented in her autobiography that a child could not grow up in a better place than a farm.

Additional Notes and Corrections – March 2019

Since writing this little book I have discovered that some of my field names are incorrect and that some of the spellings of the named fields are also incorrect. I believe this occurred because I had only heard them spoken and had never seen them written down.

I realised my mistakes when I purchased ‘Barden in Wharfedale’ by Bronte Bedford Payne published in 2016. In her book she writes about the farms on the Duke’s estate and includes Wood End. She researched documents held in the Estate Office, Bolton Abbey and mentions that the earliest enclosures were near the house and were named West Leys, Leyr and Calf Garth. Two others are named High and Low Birk Close.

Dowsill is recorded as Dowsgill and there was a High and Low Dowsgill. Brackenar is named as Bracken Haw and a small enclosure next to it as Kirk Close. There was no diagram to indicate position.

I have added two photographs of the Thompson family working in the fields that were published in her book. Photo one shows my Great Grandad Thompson, Great Grandma Jane and my Grandma Beatrice Thompson as an infant. The second shows Great Grandparents and my Grandma as a young woman and her brother George Thompson. George was the father of Muriel Clarke and Jean Marshall mentioned in my book. Jean is still alive at 95 years of age and living with her two sons at West End. (Photos loaned by Bernard Foster.)

I contacted Bernard to ask if I could include the photos in my book and he kindly gave his permission. He reminded me of the day I said farewell to Wood End in 1954. He and his father brought their cleaned out cattle wagon to remove our furniture to our new home on Winterburn Wood Estate.

