

Transcription of handwritten notes by John Martin, Bonnington Avenue. November 2003
The original notes are held by the Lanark Museum Trust

STONEBYRES - LANARK (Brief Summary of Yesterday)

Stonebyres was a fairly large estate established between Kirkfieldbank, Crossford & Lesmahagow with much of its boundaries lying between the Clyde and Nethan Waters. It is possible that what I write about now may not be accurate but it is within my memories as I can recollect.

Away back, it belonged to a Mr Graham, late of Carfin Estate, over the Clyde from Crossford. I believe one of his brothers was Clive Graham, a world renowned Racing Journalist in the field of sport (even in my time). His wealth was in shipping which eventually lost out in the first world war (submarine sinking etc) and the Estate came on the market about 1918/20. The purchaser was a Lady (spinster) Monteith Scott who also has property in the Borders - Ancrum House, Ancrum, Roxburghshire, which exists today as well as a Town House in Edinburgh. This Lady lived intermittently at Stonebyres House, dividing her stay there at both houses.

Stonebyres was a huge mansion house - 3 stories high - with endless rooms and windows and with commodious dwellings etc., for the serving classes. There was the usual household staff in residence, with outdoor employees - including my Dad as gamekeeper - a gardener, forester, fencers, woodmen and electricians, and a host of other maintenance itinerants on the Estate - some of whom were housed on the Estate. The Estate boasted of making its own electricity with high dynamo machinery together with its own gasworks on outdoor houses.

There were considerable woodlands as well as many fields, grasslands etc. which were let out for grazing etc. Dad was originally the Gamekeeper, with wild life in abundance - pheasants, grouse, deer etc. and he did take care of the domestic animals in the grazing land. The local Stonebyres burn did have trout in the pools with a homemade loch with swans/geese and other birds, as many other estates possessed at that time.

The Loch was used as a Curling Station for the neighbourhood. At that time it was a beautiful estate with larch / spruce, Rhodias, flowers of every description in the walled garden at the front of the House and Avenue. Nearby there was a host of outhouses which accommodated the Chauffeur and family as well as other paid staff.

The Estate boasted of a high walled garden with gardeners in attendance. It grew everything vegetables, fruits, etc in abundance, with lean to glass houses on the walls for all sorts of tropical fruits and for the gentry residents. Many a beautiful visit I paid there as a young boy to enjoy the fruits of grapes - tangerines - plums - currants, pears/oranges (under glass) apples etc.

The Estate was well kept and managed by a loyal staff. Alas, the Lady died and with death duties etc, the owner had to sell out Stonebyres - retaining her other property in Roxburghshire. Staff were paid off with my dad being retained with a small gratuity as Estate overseer pending the sale of the land. The demolishers from Edinburgh dismantled the Big House, disposing of whatever was saleable including the Electric Lift and countless fittings etc. leaving the "Castle" with nothing less than a shell and there it remained for a long time until it depreciated to nothing other than the 4 walls.

The forest / trees and anything worth anything on the land was taken by woodcutters to clear up the expansive pines/ firs, beeches/ plain (sic) trees /larch to be sold off for shipping purposes. The Ground was ultimately taken over by the Dept. of Agriculture as an experimental scheme for Smallholdings to offer land to be cultivated by the public interested in an unemployed occupation at reasonable terms. House/Sheds / Byres etc, were built giving some 15/30 acres of ground for cultivation by small holders willing to work and produce crops and yet be subsidised as a venture project for unemployed people. This was one of the first smallholdings in Scotland as a sustainable project to families willing to give their talents on the land - Ravenstruther in Lanark was a similar, yet smaller scheme at that time - that time comes forward to the year after 1934/35 and Stonebyres is there today, despite all the changes in the intervening years.

Saturday, its now midnight and I'll leave some more of this when I can think straight tomorrow.

THE HOUSE

It is sad to recall what this "Castle" looked like in former years. Tall, stately, with endless features of beauty. A good picture of it can tell you of its skilful erection by someone by the name of Gracie from Crossford. It contains a fine entrance at th front, overlooking a large driveway with a walled garden in front view. At the rear (tradesmen entrance) there was a large conservatory with tiled floor and surrounds and supporting annex rooms for kitchen staff. There was plenty of accommodation for the residents - bedrooms, powder rooms with supporting areas required by female occupants. There are rest rooms, smokers areas and other areas for leisure or sport. If you can find photos of the internal features of the house you will get the picture.

OUTBUILDINGS

Many of them, some half mile up the burn area - The power house -the gas works - garage, Chauffeurs's rooms - Workshop and other self contained accommodation for the working staff, all provided in a walled area and square entrance for vehicles. All well provided for the well-being of its users. Nothing left to chance with much thought being planned by builders etc. with a much modern provision in these early years where landlords etc, had the capital and cheap labour to meet the demands of the wealthy. We were the less menials at the working class level.

THE LAND

Predominately agricultural and woodland which you can readily picture.

RESIDENTS SLEEPING QUARTERS

Consisted of Lodges(ours was at East Lodge) standing at the four corners of the Estate(three of which still remain) with vehicle entrances to all of them and with maintained avenues leading to the big house. A few other houses held estate workers etc. scattered about the Estate.

SERVICES

The usual requirements - baker, fish, grocer, mail and other callers necessary out in the isolated area of Stonebyres. In fact, the Estate was well catered for despite being some 3-4 miles from the town of Lanark.

POWER

Supplied by its own electrical supply - similarly with gas, water being in abundance locally. Effluent disposal caused no problem with septic tanks and a fast running burn nearby.

ACCESS TO THE ESTATE

Near to the Lanark / Hamilton road with other roads to Lesmahagow, Auchenheath etc, with leads to Hamilton, Strathaven, Glasgow etc. There once was a busy railway and goods station at Auchenheath with leads to Hamilton / Strathaven /Glasgow etc. Therefore it was not so isolated as one would think of nowadays, although at that time the horse and cart conveyances were the main source of movement and transport.

PS. - I cannot think of much more to say and much of which I can only recall from memory and age.. In the Victorian era and years later it was a haven to live in such a beautiful area on the Clydeside, which to this day, would be the envy of many towns people. It remains popular with easy access to Glasgow and Edinburgh, and after all Lanark is next door.

Yours John Martin formerly of East Lodge Stonebyres