**THE OWNERS AND TENANTS OF FARMS IN THE PARISHES OF**

**ESKDALEMUIR, WESTERKIRK, EWES, AND LANGHOLM\***

\* Including Crossdykes (Hutton & Corrie) and Capelfoot (Tundergarth)

**INTRODUCTION**

The List of Farms in Eskdale is a remarkable compilation based on materials available to James Beattie of Westerkirk Mains, the long-serving chairman of the Westerkirk Parish Library. It will be of interest to genealogists, agricultural historians, and economic geographers, as well as to all those keen to learn more about Eskdale and district.

The typescript contains additional hand-written corrections and additions, but makes no claim to be comprehensive. Presenting the List in Excel format allows for the inclusion of further materials and information, as well as corrections. The Library Trustees have sought where possible to check inconsistent or deficient entries, but the List should be regarded as a work in progress.

The entries run from the early eighteenth century (a few from the late seventeenth century) to 1960, when James Beattie retired from Westerkirk Mains and stood down as chairman of Westerkirk Library. The List was presented, along with other historical papers, to the Library in 2018 by Huisdean Beattie, son of James Beattie, who has maintained a keen interest in the Library. The date 1960 should not, therefore, be understood in terms of tenancies and ownership as a *terminus ad quem.* The entries for rents contain some oddities, and the listing of acreage is meagre. Above all, there is confusion or overlap for several entries giving tenants and owners, not least where owners are given rental figures. As far as is consistent, these have been reconciled.

Two particular dates stand out in the List. 1722 marked the birth of Charles Walter Henry, earl of Dalkeith, subsequently 4th Duke of Buccleuch and 6th of Queensberry. 1884 saw the succession of William Henry Walter, 6th Duke of Buccleuch and 8th of Queensberry. Since the majority of farms were Buccleuch tenancies, these dates marked the renewal or adjustment of tacks, and often, in the earlier years, offer the only signposts we have to who held the farms.

The entries often refer to the ‘representatives’ of tenants. In Scots law representatives were those with a right to succeed to a heritable property, with the liability to take on the debts of their predecessors. In the text they have simply been described as heirs.

James Beattie’s compilation in some measure takes forward the earlier work of Thomas Beattie, of Crieve and Muckledale (1736-1827). His diaries, in modern typescript versions (the original has been lost), are held by Dumfries & Galloway County Archives, Dumfries, the Langholm Library, and Westerkirk Parish Library. Recently, however, they have been edited and annotated by Professor Edward J Cowan, former Professor of Scottish History at the University of Glasgow and director of the Dumfries campus of the University of Glasgow, as part of the Regional Ethnology of Scotland series under the auspices of the European Ethnological Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh. These diaries, now entitled *The Chronicles of Muckledale* [today *Meikledale*] are available on-line at: <http://www.regionalethnologyscotland.llc.ed.ac.uk>.

Thomas Beattie, a Langholm man, owned alongside Meikledale the now vanished farmstead of Crieve, opposite Crossdykes Farm, at the northeastern tip of the parish of Tundergarth, which he had acquired alongside the adjacent Newlandhill and Howdale (both also vanished). In the List of Farms there are several mentions of his granddaughter, Miss Mary Stewart Beattie. In Appendix 1 her considerable acreage and rental income are listed.

**ESKDALEMUIR EWES**

1. Glendearg 36. Eweslees

2. Over Cassock 37. Burnfoot

3. Fingland 38. Blackhall

4. Nether Cassock 39. Unthank

5. Davington 40. Mosspeeble

6. Langshawburn 41. Muckledale

7. Burncleuch 42. Bush

8. Dumfedling 43. Arkleton

9. Garwald 44. Glendivon

10. Raeburnfoot 45. Sorbie

11. Moodlaw 46. Hoghill

12. Johnstone 47. Terrona

13. Craighaugh & Johnstone 48. Cooms & Middlemoss

14. Holm

15. Clerkhill

16. Rennaldburn

17. Cote

18. Warcarrick

19. Castle O’er and Crurie

20. Todshawhill

21. Tanlawhill

22. Twiglees

**WESTERKIRK LANGHOLM**

23. Billholm 49. Potholm

24. Westerkirk Mains 50. Becks

25. Georgefield Hill 51. Cleuchfoot

26. Glendinning & Georgefield 52. Bloch

27. Megdale 53. Westwater

28. Effgill 54. Arresgill

29. Upper Stennieswater 55. Milnholm

30. Craig 56. Murtholm

31. Lynehom & Bailiehill 57. Broomholmsheils

32. Enzieholm 58. Old Irvine

33. Midknock

34. Hopsrig

35. Carlesgill

IN SEARCH OF THOMAS BEATTIE

Thomas Beattie (1736–1827) was a native of Langholm who after initial reluctance followed in his parents’ footsteps as a stockfarmer, amassing a string of farms in Eskdale and beyond throughout his long life. Some were opportunistic purchases, capitalizing upon bankruptcies in an age of fluctuating agricultural prices during the later eighteenth century; others were seen as long-term family investments, building sizeable holdings in the Ewes valley (Meikledale, Arkleton) on top of earlier purchases of Burngrains and Milnholm, and a block of land in the parish of Tundergarth which latterly comprised Crieve, Capelfoot, and Crossdykes (in the adjacent parish of Hutton and Corrie).

He began what are called his diaries (in fact, a memoir of his varied life and pursuits) in 1788 on the death of his beloved only daughter Jean. Several typescript copies of the diaries exist, but none date back before the 1950s; the original manuscript must be presumed lost. Very recently the typescript has been edited by Professor Ted Cowan of the University of Glasgow and is available online in the University of Edinburgh Regional Ethnology of Scotland series under the title *The Chronicles of Muckledale* (the then spelling). Though the typescript has an index, Cowan’s edition lacks one, which is regrettable since its pagination differs from the typescript.

Very soon the Westerkirk Library will put online its redaction of the list of farms in the four Eskdale parishes (without Canonbie) compiled by Jimmie Beattie of Westerkirk Mains, who was chairman of the Library until his retirement in 1960. The list runs from around 1700 to 1960, and contains details of tenants, owners, rental values, and occasionally acreages. The list, however, includes two further farms beyond Eskdale which bear directly upon Thomas Beattie, namely Crossdykes and Capelfoot. The land between them straddling the Water of Milk is described in John Thomson’s *Atlas of Scotland* of 1828 as ‘Crieve’, a descriptor which Thomas Beattie attached to his name, and which was used both by his son, Thomas Beattie jr and by his granddaughter, Ms Mary Stewart Beattie of Crieve, who survived until 1917! Only much later did Thomas Beattie call himself ‘Thomas Beattie of Muckledale’, where he had taken up residence.

How he first came to express an interest in ‘Crieve’ is not clear. At one time the Carruthers family of Holmains Castle near Dalton, an important county dynasty, held several Tundergarth farms – Crieve, Howdale, Newlands Hill, and Capelfoot (alongside Glaisters by Kirkgunzeon), but in 1567 they had sold out to Christopher Armstrong of Barngliesh, who was later recorded as dwelling in Howdale. From him the Armstrongs of Crossdykes and indirectly Thomas Beattie’s family descend. A case before the Court of Session in Edinburgh over the contested sale of the ‘lands of Crieve’, owned by the late John Armstrong of Capelfoot, alerted Beattie to a commercial opportunity, for on his way on foot from ‘Makman’ (the farmstead Macmaw at Waterhead of Dryfe above Boreland), which his father had bought in 1751, home to Milnholm he made a considerable detour to inspect Crieve.

‘One day’, he records, ‘I came that way and took a serious view, both of the ground and the year, and most strenuously determined to have a share in it, if it was possible to acquire it.’

In 1761 Beattie was offered a lease of Crieve, on condition that he agree to enclose and dyke, dividing it into fields of no more than forty acres. Although the land was described as ‘moss and muir’ Crieve was purchased the following year by William Elliot, an Edinburgh writer (i.e. solicitor). Beattie thought the price too high, but in 1763 he took on the tack of Newland Hill and Howdale, surrendering them two years later to William Irving of Capelfoot for a good profit. ‘I got Double the Money for the stock that it cost me…With the profits of our farms and the price of Howdale stock, we were enabled to lodge a considerable sum in Bankers’ hands in Edinburgh.’ The agricultural entrepreneur was on his way. Thomas Beattie and his father finally succeeding in buying Crieve in 1768, but the terms of the sale remained hotly contested, and not until 1785 – seventeen years later! – was Beattie’s possession finally confirmed.

Why was Thomas Beattie so set upon Crieve? What return did he expect from it? And what improvements did he make?

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Today the potential for pastoral agriculture which Thomas Beattie once espied at Crieve is not obvious. An engineer working on the Crossdykes windfarm has described the quality of the soil at the top end of Tundergarth as very poor – moss and muir, compounded by spent shells from what must have been a World War II firing-range. But as one follows the Water of Milk downstream the signs of ancient field divisions appear, stretching around half-a-mile to the Capel Burn, the boundary with Capelfoot Farm. These rectangular field outlines are separated by sod ridges, clearly visible to the naked eye, but below the crest of Newlands Hill a drystone dyke, still in good repair, runs along the length of the hill from the Capel Burn to a syke opposite Crossdykes Cottage. Most unusually, this dyke has no downhill spurs. With the help of Hamish Waugh and his drone we were able to discern further divided fields (now abandoned) above the dyke reaching almost to the top of Newlands Hill.

Thomas Beattie’s success depended upon improving the quality of the grazing. Here he encountered hostility from the Irvines of Capelfoot, whose pasturing of cattle and horses had encouraged the spread of nolt grass, a rank coarse grass which throve on land dunged by cattle but which was harmful to sheep. It appears that Beattie at Crieve concentrated on sheep-rearing on enclosed parks, though elsewhere he owned or leased cattle farms. Aerial photography reveals several enclosures with irregular stone walls (like miniature baileys without a motte), too large to be stells or bouchts, and now completely overgrown. Although close to the syke which flows into the river, they hardly resemble wash-pools. At the same time, the photographs reveal several plots of rig-and-furrow, located presumably in proximity to the farmsteads which Beattie held, where they would have supplied the household with kitchen-garden produce, including potatoes. These plots give a clue to the whereabouts of the farms, of which no trace remains, except in the case of Howdale, where an ash tree (commonly found in such tofts) still grows. Some years ago stone flags were discovered near the presumed site of Howdale. Ash trees since Viking times have been invested with mythical properties and were planted by farmers to ward off evil spirits and so protect the household.

In 1768 Crieve was finally bought by Thomas Beattie jointly with this father, though the latter insisted, for reasons unknown, in farming Newlands and Crieve separately. There seems to have been disagreement between father and son, for in 1774 Beattie’s parents moved to Bigholms in the Wauchope valley; his father seems to have taken no further interest in his son’s agricultural enterprises, which were far from over.

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Given his accumulation of farms in Tundergarth, and the later acquisition of Glendearg and Overcassock at the head of Eskdalemuir (still held by his granddaughter, Mary Stewart Beattie of Crieve in the late nineteenth century), why and when did Thomas Beattie move to Meikledale in the Ewes valley, where he died in 1827? In 1766 his father had acquired the tack of Muckledale (as it was then called) and later the adjoining estate of Arkleton. It may be that once his parents had moved to Bigholms in 1774 (was this a deliberate ousting by a ruthless son, who frequently quarrelled with his father?) Thomas Beattie took up residence there; or, alternatively, was it in 1788 after the death of his beloved daughter Jean? This shift of geographical focus may also be reflected in Beattie’s growing interest in farms in Liddesdale.

Possibly he was securing his succession, since in 1822 he acquired (or renewed) the entail of Crieve, Muckledale, and Crossdykes for his eponymous son. Yet in the early 1830s Thomas Beattie junior emigrated to Madeira (possibly for reasons of health) and died there in 1836, leaving a widow, Christine, and an infant daughter (the later Mary Stewart Beattie), who returned to Britain. Beattie junior may also have been fleeing his creditors, as protracted court proceedings show – yet in 1843 his heritors argued that Crieve (presumably with the surrounding farms) brought in £2300 per annum, a colossal sum! Unlike most agricultural improvers in the Age of Enlightenment Beattie showed no inclination to abandon the entail, even though the passing of the Entail Act in 1770 allowed for the first time a free market in land to develop. Even a century later when his granddaughter applied to alter the terms of the entail, she did so to undertake improvements, not to break the entail.

In the tangled thicket of Thomas Beattie’s career – he became a Justice of the Peace and a landowner of wide (though clearly dubious) renown – many questions are unresolved. The principal issue remains: where precisely was Crieve? No physical trace of the farm seems to have survived. But from legal documents, above all Court of Session records, Crieve is described as lying 30° North-East by East of Cairnknowe (still intact), near the head of the Robgill Burn. When the weather improves, when the grass is short, and when Covid-19 is in retreat the present authors, exchanging their books for their boots, intend to explore the terrain on foot, equipped with geophysical aids.