

## **Christmas at Lowther: All the Village got a Blanket and a joint of beef**

### **Elsie Blenkarn was born in 1908 and interviewed In 1993**

On June 1<sup>st</sup> I started a full time teaching job. Me dad wasn't happy starting a job on a Friday. "You'll not be there long he said." I stayed 12 years. I originally applied for Patterdale, Asby, Milburn and Orton. When I applied for Orton they decided I would go to Greenholme and my friend Betty Wilson would go to Orton. Well there's Tebay, Orton and there is a branch off from Orton and there is Greenholme. It is just a hamlet. There is a school house and a school about five cottages and a farm quite close together and then there were some outlying farms and other farms up Brotherdale. There were two rooms, a little room which was mine and a larger one which had the fire in. There was no other heating. There would be 50 or 60 pupils aged from five up to eight.

I went home on Fridays and came back on Mondays. And my wage then was just over £11 a month. I didn't give my mother any money but when I went home weekends I had to black-lead the range and help out scrubbing floors and such like and then when it was holidays and it was spring cleaning and .... No they never charged me anything.

At Christmas time all the village children were invited to Lowther Castle for a Christmas party. We were in the Picture Gallery. There was a huge tree with a fairy doll on the top – the first Christmas tree I'd really seen, it was beautiful and decorated. There were pictures of course. They were as big as the walls. They were horses and hunting scenes, they weren't very nice. On the floor there was a bearskin with its head on, a polar bear and there was a tiger with its head on. The fireplace was huge. Great big lumps of coal on the fire. At the side was a basket with logs and all these logs were shaved smooth so there would be no sparks.

Lord Lonsdale came in with a little cart and a horse and it was full of sweets. We all got a present and we had our tea. At Christmas all the village got a blanket and a joint of beef. When they were culling the deer everybody got a piece of venison so he didn't do badly with them really.

It was a lovely place but it's altered, they've got a lot more houses put up. Not in that little village; it is still as it was. In the summer the park and gardens were gorgeous, they were beautiful. I could spend all day wandering round there. It was a shilling to go in and there was a rose garden, a Japanese garden, there were sunken gardens and the flowers were lovely. There was a sculpture gallery which you could see when you were round the gardens. You could go right to it because it was glass and you could see all the sculptures they had in there.

I then had ten years out when I had my children. Then I took supply work here and there. I think I went to every school in Kendal except St. Thomas's; and I put in a year at Castle Street School in Kendal and in 1955 I was taken on permanently with Miss Cliburn as Head teacher. I stayed there until 1969 until it emptied. It was such a friendly place. We used to have coffee mornings and rummage sales. That was fun. At Christmas time, we were all given a certain portion of the hall and we had to do something for Christmas. I remember doing some stained glass windows at one end. The children, the bigger ones, they were told to go and make up a play and they would do it before we had our holiday. Then we had to reckon which was the best.

We lived with my sister-in-law in Orton for a while. She had a job in Castle Street owned by Miss Ashworth where they made clothes. It was just after nylon stockings came out and if you laddered them they had a machine which they used to mend them.

It was where my first son was born. The doctor and the district nurse were called but she couldn't stay until the end because she had an old mother of 90 and there was snow falling. Next morning when he was born the snow was about two-foot high.

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