



Seaton Hall (above left), one of the area's fine old buildings with a long history, is now the home of Mr J. Renwick, a retired mining engineer, and Mrs Renwick. Above right, The tree-lined drive from the house to the main road.



SOME HAPPY MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD DAYS AT SEATON

WE have received further interesting letters in reference to our recent articles on Seaton and Seaham.

Mrs Gladys Gibson of Front Street, Whitburn, and formerly of Seaham Grange Farm, writes as follows: "I follow each week your most interesting articles on our countryside and with these I am making a scrapbook. My mother was a pupil teacher at Seaton Village School in 1890. I, too, went to the village school from 1904 until 1912, then passed on to Ryhope Secondary School which opened in 1911.

"At Seaham School, Mrs Reay was the Mistress (her husband worked in the signal cabin at the station), Miss Pellow took the juniors, and Miss Jamieson the infants. I remember the wonderful time we had during the 1911 Coronation celebrations. A bazaar was held in the schoolroom to raise funds to buy prizes for the sports, etc. Mrs Challenger, from Warden Law, opened the bazaar and I presented her with a bouquet.

"Mr Benny and Harry Brough were then the squires of the village and all the boys were taught to raise their caps to them every time they were seen in the villages. Granny Smith was caretaker of the school, which was scrubbed out every week and had open fires in each room. All the farmers' children had to bring sandwiches for lunch, though tea

was made for us. There are still some of the Smith family living in Seaton. At the secondary school, our teachers were Misses Lottie and Ella Chilton, who lived at Rock House, Seaham Harbour.

Ran Away

"On Royal Oak Day we used to chant a rhyme at school: 'If you don't give us a holiday, we will all run away!' I remember once the boys did run away, through Mr Tom Boland's fields to Burdon Village. The next day they all received the cane, and without any complaints from their parents!

"We girls, after a visit of the school medical officer, were told to come to school in future either with plaits or tied hair. This my mother objected to; but all children who had not obeyed were brought to the front of the classroom and Mrs Reay tied our hair back with string.

"At lunch time we often went into Mr Brough's granary where there was a mixture of oats and locusts ready for the sheep—how we loved to eat the sweet locusts! When Mrs Reay retired, Miss Climbo became Mistress.

"We all went to St Mary's Church, Seaham, every Sunday morning. I can well remember the Rev. Angus Bethune and his housekeeper and also the Rev. Thomas Copley. Mr Angus Ellis used to take the collection and the Warham family were in the choir.

Cycle Parade

"We used to walk to church through the fields from our farm, then through the beautiful Seaham Hall grounds. On August Bank Holiday the Londonderry family were in residence for the Bank Holiday cycle parade in their grounds. They used to attend St Mary's Church where their pews are still lined with red felt.

"Their staff, too, attended each Sunday. These are just a few happy memories of my childhood days in Seaton."

Following the account of the 1911 Coronation celebrations held at Seaton, I have note from Mrs P. Humphrey of Seaton

West Farm, who recalls that in 1953 a field day and tea party were held in the long field at Seaton West Farm to celebrate the Queen's Coronation. Miss Eva Hodgson, who occupied West Farm at that time, made the tea in her kitchen and it

By
C. A. SMITH

was carried alongside the fields to the waiting children. Each child was presented with a souvenir tin of chocolates by the members of the local Parish Council. The day was fine and warm and everyone had a good time.

Farm Boundary

Since I wrote the above I have received at my request, further memories from Mrs Gibson:

"There was a square at the top of Seaton Village opposite Mr Boland's farm. This was called 'The Blacken Pot Square.'

"One of our jokes was that old Granny Smith, who was the school caretaker, had during the week the smallest piece of hair for her bun; but on Sundays this always developed into quite a large bun. We children could never understand how it grew so large on Sunday!

"Miss Pellow used to tell her class that she had eyes in the back of her head, and so when writing on the blackboard she could see if we were naughty. We were always trying to spot the two eyes, but in vain!

"I am enjoying the Seaham story very much. When you described John Candlish's walk from Sunderland to Seaham through the Ryhope Dene, I was reminded that the post on the west of the Seaham railway line was our farm boundary as were the railway, the high road to Seaham Lodge, and the dene down Byron's Walk.

"Mr Roy Snowdon, now of Hall Farm, Seaham, tells me that in some of his fields he

can see a trace of an old road which perhaps John Candlish once used.

"We used to have two walking sticks at home made of glass—one curled, the other straight, and lots of door stops (dumps) made at the Bottleworks. My father supplied straw to the Candlish Bottleworks, both at Seaham and Ayre's Quay. He died three years ago and had a marvellous memory for local events. As a boy of 11 he took milk into Sunderland before going to school, and used to tell us that there was only the Toll Bar, Anderson's Farm at Barley Moy, and Christ Church on the very bad road to Sunderland.

A General

"At the house where I was born, Seaham Grange Farm, an Army General lived in 1817. There was an inscription cut with a diamond ring on a small window above a bedroom door: 'Jane Hutton, June 29, 1829.'

"The Smiths who used to live at Thistley House, Burdon, came to the Grange in May, 1838, and left in 1865. They were followed by the Rutters in that year and they left the farm in 1887.

"Mr Trotter, my grandfather, who came from Northumberland in 1887 to take over Grange Farm stopped at the White Mare Pool overnight where the innkeeper advised him to turn back as it was such a poor farm, but he was not persuaded.

"My father succeeded Grandpa in 1901, after having started farming with his brother Tom at Field House, now Mr Harry Boland's. My Grandfather Davidson farmed at Elstob House which he left in 1865 to go to Laburnam House Farm which is now a shambles at the top of Ryhope Village.

"Today my brother John farms Seaham Grange, so it could not have been such a bad farm after all. I hope these bits and pieces will be of interest."

They will indeed Mrs Gibson and we are very grateful for your information and interest in this series.

(To be continued)



Part of Seaton Lane, one of the areas recalled in today's feature.

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A scene at West Farm, Seaton, where a field day and tea party was held to mark the Coronation in 1953.

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