**THE NORTHUMBERLAND VILLAGE BOOK: EGLINGHAM**

Back in the 1970’s, a new series of county reference books, the Villages of Britain, was launched with the aim of having each county’s villages described by their respective Women’s Institutes. In Northumberland, the project took about a year, and in 1994, the Northumberland Federation of Women’s Institutes jointly published ***The*** ***Northumberland Village Book*** with Countryside Books

The many various aspects of life, past and present, which give each village its individual character, are included with the advantage that the authors know and love the subject they are writing about. Heather Gregory, latterly of East Lilburn, wrote this piece about Eglingham using information provided by Enid Grahamslaw. It is still an interesting, if not always accurate history of the village (is the topiary a pheasant or a peacock?). It is reproduced here with the kind permission of Countryside Books.

EGLINGHAM

From a farmer’s house among the hills, a little west of Eglingham, Sir Walter Scott wrote to a friend, ‘We are most delightfully situated amidst places renowned by the feasts of former days; each hill is crowned with a tower, camp or cairn.’

The Rev Anthony Hedley said the name of Eglingham was probably derived from the British ‘eglys’ signifying a church, with Saxon term ‘ham’ – dwelling; the combination would mean a village with a church.

The village church of St Maurice celebrates its patron saint on 22 September. In bygone days a service was held in the church, and following an established custom the ‘gentry’ of the parish supplied a table each for the party, eg the Collingwoods, Milvains, Carr-Ellisons, Baker-Cresswells and other local gentry. Today, it is celebrated on the Sunday nearest the 22nd September with a service in the church and light refreshments served afterwards – how things have changed.

Until 1980 the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne was the vicar of Eglingham and was assisted by a curate who lived in Memorial House. In the time of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, the parish was fortunate to have Archdeacon Foreman. The archbishop and archdeacon were brothers in law and the archbishop spent a number of holidays at the vicarage. He was a very friendly ‘down-to-earth’ person and enjoyed having chats with the local shepherds and tradespeople.

The parish had a Franciscan brother living in retreat at Shepherd’s Law. Brother Harold lived in a caravan whilst he was building the hermitage. On completion Archbishop Runcie visited the hermitage and villagers were invited to the dedication service.

The church is associated with the village school – the present school being built in 1867 with the land being given by the Ogle family of Eglingham Hall. The school opened in January 1868 and at the end of January the number of pupils attending was 80. Today there are 42 pupils aged up to nine years attending the school.

At one time, Eglingham had two public houses: The Ogle Arms – coach stop for Alnwick and the Wooler coach – and the Tankerville Arms. The publicity for the Ogle Arms included the words, ‘This old established Family and Commercial Hotel situated amidst lovely scenery and the centre of excellent fishing strains.’ The Tankerville Arms included in its publicity,’Horse and Conveyance on Hire’. Other occupations for the villagers in the past decades included blacksmiths – and the forge is still in existence near Ogle House (formerly Ogle Arms) – and tailors ( there was a ‘drapery and tailoring establishment’ owned by Robert Coxon who also sold tobacco, pipes and pouches). There was a village shop and post office and of course the staff employed at Eglingham Hall, eg butler, cook, sewing maid, kitchenmaids, gardeners, huntsman and others.

The head gardener lived in the lodge and there is a beautiful topiary of a pheasant at the lodge gates. This is quite a focal point of the village. The topiary originated during the occupation of Eglingham Hall by the Ogle family from 1568 until the late 1800s. Oliver Cromwell visited the hall and the legend has it that Cromwell and Henry Ogle fought a duel there. The poem *Cromwell’s Visit* by James Hall is subtitled ‘ An Eglingham Legend’ and tells the story of the visit.

Amongst other occupations in the area was coal mining. There is still a shaft at Tarry, which derives its name from the coal which contained 60 -65% tar. There is now only one house at Tarry where there used to be about a dozen. The owner of the remaining house is the daughter of Colonel Milvain who lived in Eglingham Hall at the beginning of the 20th century. When Colonel Milvain moved to Eglingham Hall, the Duke of Northumberland gave him a piece of land on the understanding that he started the Milvain Hunt. The hunt is now located at Beanley Kennels – a short distance to the west of Eglingham. Colonel Milvain created another topiary up Eglingham Drive. This is appropriately of a fox and hounds and can still be seen by anyone visiting Eglingham Hall.

Sadly today there is only one public house, no village shop, no blacksmith, joiner or tailor. The post office is open for about five hours on two days of the week.

There are more houses in the village, but the old lifestyle is gone. A few people try to keep the community life going, but it is very difficult as people travel away to work – a few going to Newcastle or further afield.

The focal point for community life is the village hall, which was originally built as a watermill.

When the mill was burnt down the village hall was rebuilt on the site and opened by Lady Milvain in 1914. It is used for carpet bowls, a youth club, toddler group activities, WI meetings and their fund raising efforts, the occasional dance, whist drive and the annual leek show. These activities are supported mainly by people living outside the village.