

# Henwoodie and the Armstrongs

## The History of a Border Cottage

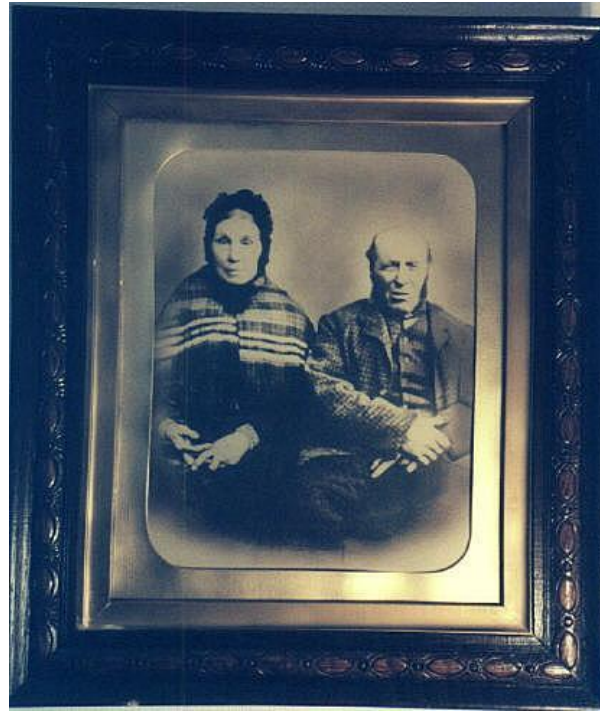


Malcolm Ingram

*'...who mindful of the unhonoured dead,  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate.'*

## Introduction

For some forty years a golden wedding photograph has hung in our home. Large, with a gilded surround and a carved wooden frame, it shows my great grandparents, Thomas and Mary Armstrong, at the time of their Golden Wedding in 1898. Irreverently, they were styled 'Tom and Jerry' by my children -their great-great grandchildren -when young. Thomas was born at Henwoodie, in the parish of Roberton, then in Selkirkshire, now in Roxburghshire.



In the years after 1945 my mother, Dora Ingram, and her brother, Francis Armstrong, were eager to trace their origins. Their grandparents had migrated west from Henwoodie, in the hills above Hawick, to the farms of Craighousesteads and Caplefoot, in Tundergarth parish, Dumfriesshire, where they, with my Aunt Ella, and Uncles Tom, Archie, and Alexander, were born and raised. Originally they had little more than the name to go on— 'Henwoodie' – but Uncle Frank found it and visited it in the 1960's, to find that it was now in the newly planted Craik Forest, abandoned and demolished. At that time my mother had visits from several distant Australian relatives, also in search of their ancestors, for it was it from Henwoodie that almost all of a large Armstrong family emigrated to Australia.

For years I had nursed a romantic dream of finding some fairytale cottage in a clearing in the woods, ruined, a hidden monument to the Armstrong family. I had no idea then where it was, except that it was in the Borders, east from Dumfriesshire. I longed to see it, but lacked the knowledge to find it.

Now, the growth of the internet has made it simple and cheap to carry out research. I was prodded into action by a letter from my cousin Francis Armstrong, son of the Francis above, who put his son, Michael Julian, in touch with me. In a short time Michael had uncovered more of the family history than had two previous generations. He continues to trace our ancestors, now back to the second half of the eighteenth

century, spread across the Borderland, both in England and Scotland. He has also uncovered and contacted relatives in Australia, New Zealand and North America. Family trees are important, but I am equally curious about the personalities and life stories behind the names and dates. I want to revive dead bones, and to turn genealogical charts into family history and biography, and link them to local and social history.

Most of the family history work was done by Michael Julian Armstrong, and we were helped in innumerable ways by Gerry Linton, now in British Columbia, but born in New Zealand. His ancestor, Robert Linton, was born within a mile of Henwoodie, and married Barbara Armstrong, one of the Armstrong family born at Henwoodie.

Together the Lintons emigrated to Australia and then to New Zealand. (see 'Barbara's Story')

I inherited few documents: a typed outline of the Armstrong family history my mother had prepared, helped by Australian relatives; one or two letters between her and her brother Frank about family history; and photographs of two Henwoodie Armstrong men, still unidentified. Like mediaeval saints whose portraits show their attributes, one holds a shepherd's crook, the other has his dog at his feet. There is no question of their calling, nor of their pride in it. The photographs were taken in Hawick, probably prior to their departure to Australia



In the last year foot-and-mouth disease has raged across England and the Scottish Borderland, beginning in Northumberland and seriously afflicting Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway. The latter had 176 of the total of 2030 cases. More than four million animals were slaughtered, including 3,306,000 sheep. The cost of the outbreak was £2.7 billion pounds. 1 in 10 of the farmers affected plans to leave agriculture. The outbreak lasted almost a year before it was declared at an end in February 2002. It was against this depressing background that I researched the history of these Scottish shepherds and their families

I read much Scottish social and economic history of the period, and sought out all the local history texts and old maps available for Robertson parish, where Henwoodie stood. In September 2001 I spent three days in the area.

## The walk to Henwoodie

I drove out of Hawick on a fine mid-September morning – sunshine and only a few small clouds in the blue sky, crisp and clear, the trees not yet beginning to turn. The little road beside Borthwick Water runs through Roberton parish, soon narrowing, but providing passing places. I met only two other cars in ten miles, but the road has many blind bends and I had been warned to take care, as huge lorries carrying logs from Craik Forest could confront me at any time. As I went along, all the farm names at their roadends were familiar from my maps, but I had underestimated the distance. I knew a carter had covered the valley back and forth to Hawick daily in Victorian times; I knew that the Armstrong children had walked many miles back and forth to school; but even by car it seemed longer than I had expected.

Few cows because of the foot and mouth disease, but this parish had been lucky: the nearest case was some miles east of Hawick, in Cavers parish.

The small parish of Roberton extends west from the town, a long sausage-shape surrounding the river. At the end it rises steadily and widens to hills. Here on the high ground was the sheep country, now dark and black, the spruce of Craik Forest extending for many miles in all directions. West of it is the Eskdalemuir Forest, and East into Northumberland is Keilder Forest. The three cast a shadow stretching for hundreds of miles over the Border hill country, once dotted with sheep and their shepherds' cottages. The sheep are still to be seen, but in the valleys. The cottages are mostly demolished, but on the edge of the forest, overlooking Borthwick Water, I saw one surrounded by sheep.

The architecture was very similar to Henwoodie – a simple cottage with byre attached at one gable, and a few outhouses.



Craik

The road now ran into the forest, the trees closely packed on both sides. After another mile or two I reached a car park beside a row of post-war forestry cottages – now occupied by commuters to Hawick; there was no-one to be seen. The whole parish that morning seemed deserted.

Up past the cottages I found the big house of Craik, and the farmyard and outhouses behind. I had thought both had been demolished when the farm was abandoned in the 1960's; but the house is occupied, although the farmyard has only a few pieces of rusting machinery lying around.

Craik was the major farm below Henwoodie, which was probably an outpost of the farm. Mrs Kathleen Stewart, farmer and local historian, lives nearby at Milsington farm. She believes that the Armstrongs of Henwoodie may have paid their rent to Craik's owners rather than to the ubiquitous Duke of Buccleuch, the largest landowner in the area.. I knew that James Armstrong, one of the Henwoodie family, worked here as a teenager while learning his trade as a herd, and that his sister Esther worked at the farm as a servant, aged thirteen.

I put on my boots and shouldered my rucksack, misread my map, and started off past Craik farmyard, only to find the track vanish. I returned to the car park and found the forestry road to take me upwards and north-east towards my goal – the site of Henwoodie. The Forestry Commission, having ruined the landscape, now tries to make amends by providing walking and cycling paths through its dark glades. RAC rallies are held on the forestry roads, and international mountain bike tournaments make use of specifically marked tracks. All these are on their guide map, and helped me find my way, but as I climbed the road, the tracks marked on the map vanished.

There has been some clearing of the trees and as the road winds round and up the hill I had good views back down over the lower slopes and over to more forested hills on the other side of the valley. I was quite alone apart from one forestry lorry passing me at the start of my walk. In the far distance I could hear tree-felling in progress.

After some two hours, with the sun now very warm, I was near to where I thought Henwoodie should be. I looked for the marked tracks that would take me past it, but none were to be seen – the trees were tightly planted, the bracken grew to some three feet between them, and the ground rose very steeply.

Another half hour and I was well past the area, and defeated. I consoled myself by thinking that I had been close, and that I now had a clearer idea of the height at which they lived and what views they must have had to the east and the south.

I was surprised, as I walked back, to find a car parked not far from where I had been searching for Henwoodie. A man was lurching in the driver's seat.

'Are you local?', I asked.

'Not exactly,' he said, 'Ordnance Survey.'

'Just the man,' I said, producing my maps, 'You can help me'.

He studied them, produced a laptop computer, and on its huge screen wrote 'Henwoodie' with a stylus. A map of the area appeared, but no Henwoodie, and he told me that it must have been demolished! I told him that I knew that, but had the map reference from the Forestry Commission.

When I returned to Glasgow I met a medical colleague. An ex- orienteer, he sympathised – forests are notoriously difficult, he said. I should go in the late winter when the bracken dies down and old paths may be visible. He offered me his portable satellite navigation device for any future visit. I plan to return although my wife tells me that if I do I deserve to be locked up.

Despite this failure, I had had success the previous day when I was invited to lunch at Milsington, home of Kathleen Stewart, who has written the history of Roberton parish. Born a Scott, the most common name in the immediate area, and distantly related to Sir Walter Scott, her house is graced by a flagpole with a heraldic flag celebrating the family. Both her father and her grandfather farmed here, and the house is full of mementoes of earlier days: a portrait of her grandfather, a shepherd's traditional black and white plaid, and innumerable papers and photographs.

She told me that she went to Henwoodie on the day that the last tenant was leaving, at the time when the Forestry Commission were about to demolish it. There she shared a drink with him. She remembers visiting Henwoodie and its neighbour Craikshiel as a

child, and looking at my photograph of Henwoodie she pointed to the field in the foreground and told me how her horse had become bogged down there once. Her father in his reminiscences recalls hearing about past Armstrongs in Australia. Milsington is on the old road to Henwoodie, now gone.

## **Family Tree**

### **Henwoodie Beginnings**

The first of our family to live at Henwoodie were Francis Armstrong and his wife Mary Murray. They married in 1823; he was 21, his bride had been born a day later in the same year, 1802. The wedding took place in the bride's home parish of Westerkirk, in Scotland, but Francis had been born in Northumberland. His parents, Thomas Armstrong and Jane Renwick married at Falstone St Peters, Northumberland, in 1797, and lived in that area at various addresses until at least 1816, when their eighth and last child was born. Francis was their third child, and the first boy, born at Hawke's Knowe, Falstone.

### **Francis and Mary and their children**

After Francis and Mary married they had their first child, Thomas, two years later, in 1825. He was born at Henwoodie, so it is likely that his parents moved to Henwoodie soon after their marriage in 1823. Thomas, my great-grandfather, was an 'internal migrant'. He moved west and south via Langshawburn in Eskdalemuir, and finally settled and raised his family in Tundergarth parish Dumfriesshire; see 'The Golden Wedding'.

His parents went on, over the next 25 years to have a total of ten children, seven girls and three boys, the last child born when Mary was 47 years old.

The children were:

Thomas b 1825

Janet 1827

Jane 1829

James 1832

Barbara 1835

Esther 1837

Margaret 1839

Ellenor 1841

John 1845

Elizabeth 1847

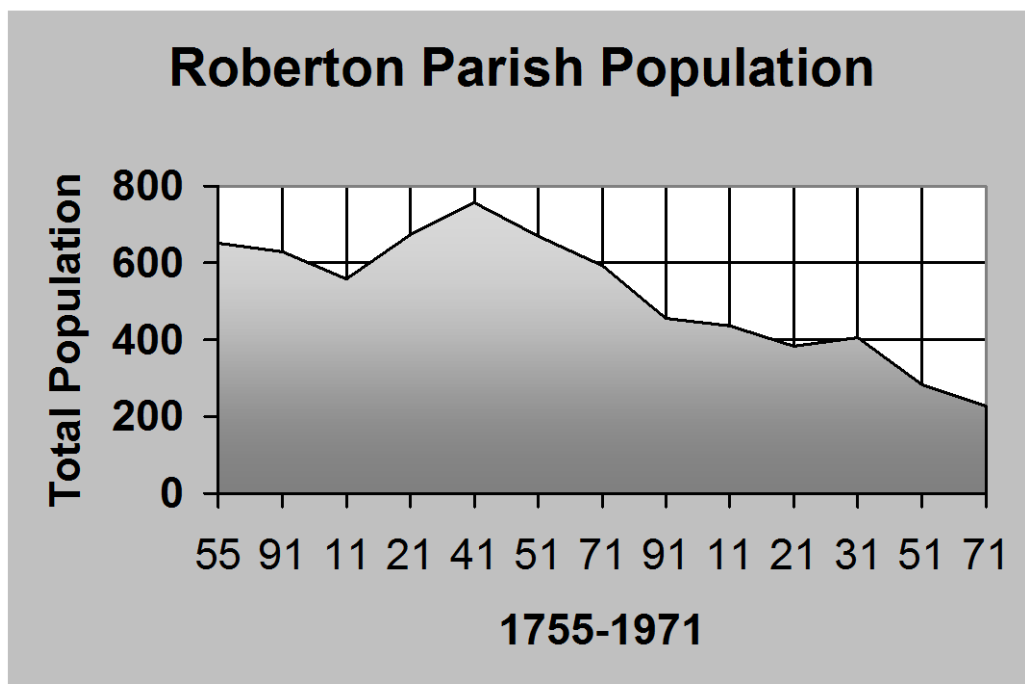
Esther, aged 13, was servant to a shepherd at Craik, the neighbouring farm, which may have owned Henwoodie cottage. Barbara worked as a nursemaid in Hawick, in a house in the High Street, and at 25 was a domestic servant to Robert Linton at Cavers, a parish immediately east of Hawick. When 26 she married him – a widower of 35 - and they emigrated soon after, first to South Australia, and later to New Zealand. All the children were baptised. The only place of baptism mentioned is Gair where Margaret was baptised on 6 Oct 1839 – she had been born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July. Delays between birth and baptism were usual, accounted for by the harvest and the busy time

of the shepherd's year. By the early 1860's all of this large family had left Henwoodie and the parish of Roberton.

## Early Nineteenth Century Scotland

The history of families is bound up with the history of the parish, the history of the nation, and even with international factors, especially when they emigrate to the other side of the world. All this is convincingly illustrated by the Armstrong family. Where we lack detailed knowledge of some of them, we can often make informed surmises from a study of the history of the time.

For example, consider this graph of the changing population of their parish from 1755 up to the seventies of the twentieth century. It shows how the population of Roberton reached a peak in about 1840. The Henwoodie Armstrongs are typical of the time in the large size of their family, and they were not alone in leaving the parish. The population began to decline after 1840, and the family departed to Australia in the 1860's.



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Fortunately, Roberton parish is well documented. There are the several statistical accounts by the parish minister, several reminiscences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Kathleen Stewart's recent parish history.

## The first of Henwoodie

The earliest mention of Henwoodie is in the Polwarth Papers of 1658, containing a list of rooms, steadings, mills and cotts on Borthwick, with the number of residents. Henwoodie is listed, has six residents and is placed, accurately, as three miles from Roberton and 9 miles from Hawick. So it was occupied for three centuries until its destruction in about 1960.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century 488 people lived within a mile of Roberton church, 775 within two miles, and 889 within three miles. When the 'waterhead' of Borthwick was included, the total was 957 people, much higher than the later figures in the graph above.

There is a 1650 list of communicants to Robertson church which gives both names and addresses. Henwoodie is not on the list. But eight Armstrongs are on the list, six of them female and two male, all in different locations and presumably all single servants .

There is a Walter A at Borthwickbrae, a Jannet A at Wester Broadley, a Johne A at Howcleuche, a Margaret Armstrong at Maines, a Bessie A at Chapelhill, and a Marie A at Rough-Heuche. There is also a Bessie Lyntoune at How-Pasley. None seems to be part of a family, so all may be incomers to the parish. They are unlikely to have been relations of our Armstrong family who were later incomers. In fact the Armstrong name has always been uncommon in the parish. Other names are much more frequent, then and now: Scott, by far the commonest, followed by Riddel, Briggs, Glendinning and Chisholm .

## Roberton parish and Borthwick Water

"A parish in the counties of Roxburgh and Selkirk, situated at the western extremities of these shires, where they march with that of Dumfries. It is estimated to extend 13 miles in length, and 6 in breadth, watered by the little river Borthwick, and the river Ale, beside several small lakes which give rise to these streams. The general appearance is hilly; but none of the eminences are of extraordinary elevation. From the banks of the rivers the surface rises by a gentle ascent; and the low grounds, except where beautified with planting, are in a state of cultivation. The higher grounds afford excellent pasture, interspersed with considerable patches of moss ... There are several remains of encampments and fortifications: one large square encampment, well fortified, bears the name of Africa, communicating with one of a semicircular form. Population in 1801, 618." from *Gazetteer of Scotland* published 1806, Edinburgh.

The Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, Vol 6 (1885, Edinburgh) notes the hamlet of Deanburghhaugh: 'At no distant date the hamlet contained above 100 inhabitants; there are now less than 20.' Henwoodie is also mentioned: 'The Ale water, rising near Henwoodie, at an altitude of 1100 feet, runs eight miles north-eastwards traversing Alemuir Loch and the Ashkirk boundary.'

Roberton parish runs west from the town of Hawick, like a long sausage, and the Borthwick Water runs through it. At the western end the ground rises steadily, and it is in this hilly area that Henwoodie lies. Henwoodie Cottage is now located in Craik Forest, Ordnance Survey Grid Reference NT349116.

## The Statistical Accounts

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland, written by the minister of each parish, give invaluable information about life and work in Scotland in the last two centuries. Those for Roberton comprise one written in the the 1790's, and another from 1834, when the Armstrong family had been at Henwoodie for some nine years. A third, published in 1992, but written in 1950, and later updated, brings the history up to recent times. This is a summary of the information in them.

## Geography and Weather

The parish lies almost midway between the east and west coasts of Scotland. Nearly one-third more rain falls than in Edinburgh. It is said to get the worst of the weather from both the west and the east. Rheumatism is common, especially in the elderly. The 1790's account says: 'the noxious effects of a damp atmosphere were formerly prevented by the copious use of spirits, and now by better houses and clothing.'

## Land

'The landowners are the Duke of Buccleuch and some nine others. There are four mansion houses.' (1840)

'There are many mosses in the parish, containing excellent peat, the main fuel in the parish. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was collected and taken to Hawick for sale by cottagers living near the mosses – a cheaper fuel than coal from Lothian or Northumberland. Fish are abundant in the rivers and lakes.'

## Deanburghhaugh

The village of Deanburnhaugh ('A lapsed Border Village' - Transactions of the Hawick Archaeological Society, 1951, 24-32.) is eight miles from Hawick, built on the haugh or low-lying ground by the burn which flows through: the Dean Burn. It was the nearest village to Henwoodie, grew rapidly in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and had a population of about 100, most working on the estate of Hosscote or the farm at Milsington, for about tenpence or a shilling a day. There was a public house, a grocer, a joiner and a shoemaker. It was the scene of gatherings parties and dances during the winter months.

It flourished briefly, then declined as quickly. By 1909 only five of the twenty-five houses remained, and two them were standing empty. The hundred inhabitants had dwindled to less than a dozen and in the surrounding fields grain had been replaced by grass, and sheep replaced cattle. (Scott, 1909) Today there is a sawmill on the site of four old cottages.

## Roads

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the road through the parish, following the Borthwick water, was the most direct road from Dumfries to Hawick and Selkirk, but not made up for part of its route, although 'the gentlemen of Dumfries' had carried it to the border of their county.

The village was founded at the junction of two important highways. The first, mentioned above, runs west to east, approaching Borthwick Water from Eskdalemuir, passing the Roman camp of Raeburnsfoot, and thence by Craikcross, Howpasley and Milsington eastwards to Hawick. It dates from Roman times, at least in part. It is mentioned in mediaeval times, and was in use in both the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. After the new turnpike road to Langholm and Carlisle was built it would be used only by packmen and drovers, and with the arrival of railways it was no longer of use as a connection to Dumfriesshire.

The other road – known as the 'Drove Road' – ran north and south, and passed through the main street of Deanburnhaugh. It ran north by Hosscotesheil, very close to Henwoodie. Many early British forts lie along the route - including the so-called 'Catrail'. The road was much used after the Treaty of Union, 1707, which, with the Borders pacified, encouraged more cross-border exchange of goods.

Large stocks of sheep and cattle at the main Scottish markets of Falkirk and Crieff attracted English buyers. Drove roads were used to avoid tolls and metalled surfaces. A straight line from Falkirk to Newcastle runs through west Roxburghshire and is the halfway point of the route. It carried coals north from Northumberland as late as 1814, and was in use as a drove road from Scotland to England as late as 1858.

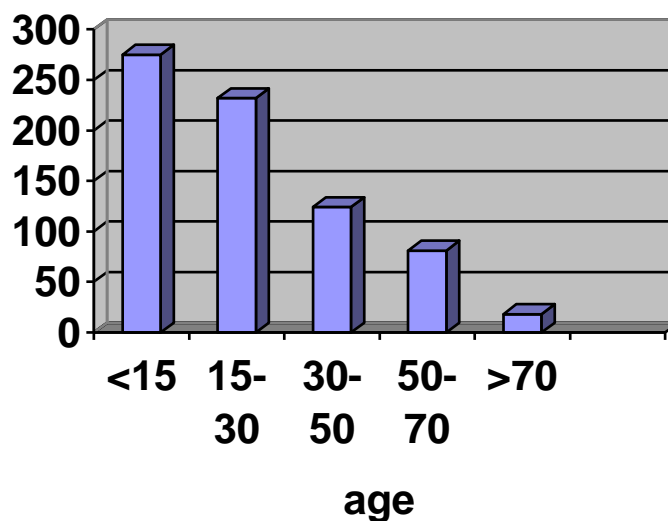
So, despite its seeming isolation, Henwoodie was only a mile or two from a small village, and less from two main arteries of human and animal traffic. We know that the Armstrongs used family 'networking' extensively. The roads must have provided them with news and contacts from all over Scotland and the north of England.

All this quickly fell into disuse with the arrival of the railway. At its peak in 1849-50 there were about 110 inhabitants around Deanburghhaugh; by 1866 it had fallen to fifty. With the decline of the roads the village at their crossroads soon vanished.

### Population

In 1831, when the Armstrong family had recently arrived in Roberton parish, it was dominated by young people

## 1831 Population ages



At this time the average number of births annually over the previous seven years had been thirteen, while annual deaths averaged seven, and marriages seven. There was a small excess of females in the population of 1M: 1.03F.

Contrast the youthful profile shown by the graph, with the present day, when the population over fifty almost equals that of **all** those under fifty years.

### Diet

In the 1830's the average diet comprised 'barley, and a small amount of wheaten bread, oat-meal porridge, broth and butcher-meat occasionally, fish, butter, cheese, potatoes, milk, and tea.'

## Poaching

In the years before 1830 the parish was greatly troubled by gangs of poachers coming from manufacturing towns when trade was slack. They threatened the locals and regularly assaulted the gamekeepers, and lived rough in the parish for weeks at a time. In 1829, they were attacked and arrested by a large number of the local people, and the most notorious were jailed. The rate of poaching dropped thereafter. The landowners turned a blind eye to minor poaching of fish by the local peasantry.

## Agriculture

In the 1830's about 2000 acres were cultivated; the uncultivated sheep-walks made up about 28,000 acres. It was thought at the time that perhaps it was unprofitable to cultivate this number.

## Wages

In 1830 the daily rate for labour in summer was about 2 shillings (10p) or 2/6d; in winter 1s 8d to 1s 10d. The wage of a ploughman, which included his food at the farm where he was employed, was from £8 to £10 10s.

## Sheep

AS early as 1790 the Roberton minister claimed that '*the peculiar fitness of the foil, for the pasturage of sheep, is evinced by their reputation in the country for soundness, for carcase, and for wool.*'

There were about 19,000 sheep in the parish, mostly Cheviots, more or less crossed with the Leicester ram, and some black-faced.

Several sheep farms had no ring fences but most were bounded by drystone dykes. By the 1830's the sheep runs had been greatly improved by drainage, mostly surface drains, resulting in fewer marshy areas, increase in the growth in grass, and a reduction in disease, especially rot, although louping ill was a major problem in the flocks, sometimes with a death rate of one-fifth of the flock.

## Church

In 1834 the bulk of the the population attended the Established church at Roberton, 112 families, a total of 626 individuals. The average attendance at communion was 200. There were some 19 dissenting families, totalling 104 people. The position changed with the disruption of the Scottish church in 1843, described below.

By the 1980's the church membership was 129, a fifth of what it was 150 years earlier, and average Sunday attendance was 12 to 18 people. In 1972 the church was linked with one of the Hawick churches, and in 1983 the manse was sold, and the minister lived in Hawick. Weekly services in the church were discontinued in 1984. Some Parish church records survive going back to 1679. The original church was built in 1690, beside the Roberton churchyard. It was replaced by the present building in 1863.

In 1841 the Kirk Session was worried about a lack of resident elders, decided to take steps to remedy it, and 'requested the male communicants to prepare and give lists, signed and sealed, containing the names of at least six parishioners whom they may think best fitted to fill that important office.' The lists were opened on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1842 and six appointed:-

Allan E(lliott) Lockhart, Esq of Borthwickbrae  
Mr Andrew Anderson, Woodburn  
Major Pott  
Mr Paterson, Greenbank  
**Mr Francis Armstrong, Henwoodie**  
Mr Robert Brown

Here is the father of the Henwoodie family of the time, figuring among the gentlemen of the parish!

By 1847, the Moderator of the church is Mr Greenhill, the elders are Messrs. Smith , Ettrick, Mackenzie, and Ashkirk; Thomas Anderson is the Clerk. What happened in these five years to lead to this complete change? Not one of the 1842 elders remains.

The answer is simple. The Disruption of the Scottish Church took place in 1843, when the argument over patronage reached its climax, and those who believed tht the congregation should appoint its minister broke away and formed the Free Church.

When this happened, the Robertson congregation split, and those who left held services for some time in the joiner's yard at Deansburnhaugh. A Free Church was opened on Chisholme land in 1843, and by 1848 there were 60 members.

From all this it is a fair deduction that the Armstrongs of Henwoodie joined the Free Church, and this dissenting tendency is supported by the record of a baptism of one of the children in the 1830s not being held in Robertson Parish Church.

The parish church records— after the disruption and up to 1880 - contains notes of shortage of elders, and of many named people, including the schoolmaster, declining to be elders. Up to 1865 there are notes of individuals confessing fornication and being admonished, and arguments over paternity of children.

These parish records support current research destroying the myth of great popular support for the church in the nineteenth century.

## **‘Reminiscences of Borthwick Water’**

To add flesh to these statistical bones of parish and church history there is an excellent memoir by George Scott. Born in 1836 in Deanburnhaugh and raised there, he was an exact contemporary and near neighbour of the Armstrongs at Henwoodie. He attended the same school as the Henwoodie children.

He recorded his childhood memories in two papers to the Hawick Archaeological Society in 1909 and 1910, giving a detailed account of the social life of the parish from 1836 and for the next twenty years, with comments on the changes that had taken place during his lifetime.

### **Religion**

One of his outstanding childhood memories was of the dominating role of religion. In the 1840's the Scottish Sabbath was strictly observed and enforced. All work and recreation was forbidden, even walking and talking with friends and neighbours. On Saturday night, water was fetched from the well, and firewood and peats were brought into the kitchen, tasks forbidden the next day. On Sunday the family supped their porridge at seven in the morning, dressed in their best clothes and set off on the long walk to church. The children attended Sunday School from 10 until 11.15. In preparation they had had to memorise four verses of a psalm, six verses from the

Bible, and several questions and answers from the Shorter Catechism. Failure to do so was punished.

Public worship followed and lasted from 11.30 until 2.30., comprising not only prayer, praise, and a sermon, but also 'the lecture', a detailed exposition of a chapter of Scripture.

Then the long walk home, a meal of kail or brose, and hours of tedium for the children, obliged to remain indoors and read only religious works, their mother sitting by with the tawse to punish any rebellion.

Attendance at church, and Sabbath Day observance were compulsory in the community, and enforced by a powerful Kirk Session of mostly well-to-do men, who even had powers to enter and search the houses of the congregation. Francis Armstrong was one of them for a few years. This lack of liberty and freedom led to much discontent in the parish.

With an elder in the house, the young Armstrongs must have been expected to set an example in all this to the rest of the parish, and must have endured this formidably oppressive regime.

But religion was a powerful positive force, too. Scott gives a moving account of his outing one Sabbath morning in the summer of 1844, when he walked many miles barefoot over the hills, past Henwoodie, to Buccleuch, where he attended an outdoor Cameronian<sup>1</sup> communion, or conventicle, with some seven or eight hundred others, and four ministers. The services and psalm singing continued from 11am until 4.30 in the afternoon.

By 1844, the Cameronians must have been a relatively small sect, but the date is significant. The Disruption of the Scottish Kirk had taken place the previous year, and this meeting may have been a gathering of those who had left the Established Church and would form the Free Church of Scotland.

## Schooling

We are lucky to have Scott's account of the schools that he and the Armstrong children attended. He started school at the village of Deanburnhaugh in 1841, aged five. He mentions that some of the pupils came from a good distance and cites Henwoodie, three miles away, as one of the more distant ones. Barbara and Esther Armstrong were only a year or two older and would be his classmates.

This was not the main parish school but a so-called 'side school'. The teacher was paid by the parents in odd ways. Each pupil brought from one to three pence each Monday for Mr Amos, the teacher, and in addition he had a right to free board and lodging at the house of each pupil – one week in the year for each pupil in the house. He avoided the distant houses in the winter when the weather was bad and the days short, so must have been a guest at Henwoodie during the spring or summer months. Discipline was strict, boys being chastised with willow wands which they had to cut for their own punishment, while the girls were punished with the tawse.

The master was strict about reading and spelling. There were exams in March and prizes were given for various subjects and for the best-behaved scholar of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> The Cameronians were a Presbyterian sect led by Richard Cameron (1648-80). He was a precentor and schoolmaster in Falkland Fife, who after a stay in Holland returned to Scotland and with a group of his adherents made the Sanquhar Declaration, renouncing their allegiance to the King, and declared war. They were pursued through Nithsdale and Ayrshire, and in a battle at Airds Moss near Auchinleck, they were defeated and Cameron killed. His hands and head were exhibited on the Netherbow Port in Edinburgh.

On Hansel Monday, the first Monday in the year, each pupil brought a sum of money to pay the teacher, and the one who brought the largest sum was named as king or queen of the school for that year. There was then a holiday.

The summer holidays were a moveable feast, and depended on the harvest, when all the children were needed in the fields. Children also helped dig the peats in May, but after school hours. Every pupil brought a peat daily to school to add to the peat stocks in the corner of the classroom.

Here and in Roberton school to which the children moved at about the age of eight there were some odd customs. 'Barring out' took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. On the previous day the school key was left at a certain house and the next day several pupils locked themselves in the school and tried to prevent the master and the remaining pupils gaining entry. The proceedings often became violent, a kind of Border equivalent to the Eton wall-game, with damage both to property and pupils. At Roberton school, several miles further for the Henwoodie children to walk, the teacher was a Mr Anderson. The Hansel ceremony was performed there too, with larger sums of money, and afterwards the children were given a wine glass of toddy and a piece of cake – a 'nacket.'

### Country Weddings in the 1840s

Births, marriages and deaths were almost the only occasions on which there were official social gatherings, and weddings in particular were accompanied by elaborate and prolonged rituals.

When a couple decided to marry, their first decision was when to proclaim their banns, an expensive procedure. To have them proclaimed the necessary three times cost a guinea: 21 shillings (£1.05), if done in one day, but 7s 6d (38p) if spread over three Sundays, so the latter was usual.

The wedding took place on the Friday following the banns. On the Wednesday evening before, the bridegroom had a stag night. In these days it was called 'the feet-washing' and took place at the house of the bridegroom's father. The ceremony – a very old tradition - was accompanied by refreshments and many pranks. Later the bride and her friends joined the men for a social evening with much singing. The bridegroom received gifts in the course of the evening, including a dress shirt of homespun linen from the bride's mother, and a silk handkerchief, the prize for a running race that followed the wedding.

The following day (Thursday), the bride's plenishing was brought to her house. She would have provided herself with blankets and sheets of homemade yarn, spun and made by herself over several years. She would usually have another chest of her clothing, and an 'aumry' or large press in two parts: the 'drawers', and supplies of meal, butter, and cheese.

On Thursday evening she would have a 'hen' night, again involving the footwashing ceremony, and the women were later joined by the bridegroom and the men. The bride would receive her gifts, always including brass candlesticks fitted with candles. Guests were generous with their gifts, and the couple often were able to cover the cost of the entertainments, and even to have a surplus towards furnishing their new home. On the day of the wedding the bridegroom and his party came to his bride's house, and the whole company walked to the manse, headed by a fiddler. After the ceremony they returned to the house of the bride's parents in similar style, but the young men raced to be first there: 'running the broose'. In more affluent or less hilly areas this

took place on horseback. The silk handkerchief mentioned above was the mens' prize, presented by the bridegroom. The boys' prize was a cotton handkerchief.

The rest of the day was spent in 'feasting, music, and dancing,' which continued for most of the night. One more custom completed the day. The best man took the key of the couple's new house, waited for them there, and when they entered he locked them in for the night, and set them free the following morning.

Parties continued on the Saturday, and on the Sunday the couple were 'kirked'. On the walk to church the bride carried bread and cheese, which she distributed to all she met. The kirking was considered the final act of the week's ceremonies, and the couple were now regarded as fully wed, as well they might be after such an exhausting week!

Scott's reminiscences depict a way of life that had long vanished, even when he described it at the beginning of the twentieth century. This small remote community was poor, harshly regulated, and ruled by the church, which sought out sin, especially of the flesh, and punished it by public rebuke. They made their own entertainment, and had long established rituals for celebrating the seasons of the year, and the major events of life and death.

## **The Shepherd's Life**

### **Farm Servants in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

The agrarian revolution at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century involved rotation of crops, organisation, and technical advances. Farming methods in the Scottish Lowlands were highly successful and widely copied at home and abroad. So the Henwoodie Armstrongs grew up and worked in a place and period of improved agricultural methods.

But labour recruitment and payment had not changed as it had in England. Most permanent workers were farm servants rather than labourers, hired for a year if married, for six months if single. The married were paid in kind, given a cottage, ground, permitted to keep a cow, and given an allowance of oats, barley, pease and cash for planting potatoes. Rental was paid for by the labour of wife and daughters during the harvest. Unmarried males and females boarded in the farm steading with food and accommodation.

The farm day was ten hours with two hours rest at midday: seven to twelve and two to seven. In winter this was reduced by the lack of light.

Payment in kind, the steading, the 'long hire'; all dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Scottish-English differences were related to labour supply: the movement of labour to the cities caused by the industrial revolution. The long hire system suited mixed husbandry – stock rearing, fattening, and cropping were combined. Climate and soil favoured the classic Scottish five year rotation. And it was important to have both horses and ploughmen in the steading.

Scotland had none of the English farm riots. Being paid in kind, the workers were not subject to price fluctuations in food. But to be unemployed meant no home and being forced to move to find new work. Hiring fairs and feeing markets were regular seasonal events in the Border towns. Because of a shortage of cottages for married couples, newly-weds often had to travel long distances to find a home. The first move of the Armstrong parents to Henwoodie from Northumberland is an example.

Upland farms: Shepherds, ewemilkers, and smearers..

The traditional labourers on an upland farm – later a marginal farm – worked with sheep. The shepherd was the leading figure, equivalent to a farm steward on farms in the valleys. He had charge of a ‘hirsell’ of sheep and often had a ‘young herd’ as an apprentice, as James Armstrong must have been at Craik Farm in his youth.

The shepherd was an all-rounder with many skills – castrating lambs, dressing sheep for market, smearing and dipping, and also repairing stone dykes, cleaning out drains, mowing grass, making hay, casting or winning peats or turfs, etc. In July and August he and his household were joined by a company of girls for some two months of ewe milking and subsequent butter and cheese making. In the Autumn, men were taken on for ‘smearing’ to protect the sheep against parasites and weather.

On this kind of mixed farm there might also be a ploughman. The women worked in the house and byre, and boys over 7 looked after growing lambs and cattle, or helped in another household.

At hiring fairs in the market towns, shepherds wore tufts of wool in their hats. Carters had a piece of whipcord. At some fairs a straw in the mouth served as a sign of wanting to be hired.

An unmarried shepherd earned £6-£10 per annum, with board and accommodation. The term ‘boll’ or ‘gains’ was used for wages paid in kind. On hill farms the shepherd was the best paid servant, able to keep a pig and poultry, and supplied with coals – ‘paid for but led free.’ His cottage might be anywhere, and remote. He was allowed grazing for 45 sheep of his own – a small flock called ‘the flock’.

Children worked from the age of seven. They fetched and carried peats, dug potatoes and washed them in the burn, cleaned out the byre, swept out the house, took warm milk to the lambs, and washed the dishes, all for 12 shillings for six months.

To counter the uncertainties of the servant system, many friendly societies were created in the early nineteenth century, into which workers paid 5 or six shillings annually for insurance. In Border districts many new cottages were built for workers in the 1830s – they were much needed, as existing ones were primitive. They were sturdy, with three rooms and a loft, slated or pantiled roofs, and stone and lime walls. But even by 1861 the most dwellings in a Border parish had only one or two windows and a few had none at all. Old-established Henwoodie must have been gradually modified and expanded over its three centuries of occupation.

### Ewe Milking and Whey Brose

There were no auction marts in these days and most lambs were sold at the Lammas Fair. After the lambs had gone the ewes were gathered together and put into folds. They were then milked by a team of milkers complete with their wooden stools – ‘creepie’ or ‘crackie-stool’ and wooden ‘luggie’, a wooden pail with a handle formed by one of the projecting staves. After this Ewe Milking the ewes were released again, and the milk taken to the nearest shepherd’s cottage, where his wife would prepare it for the ‘curding’ in the ‘Whey-sey’ – a tub in which the milk was curdled. The same evening the cottars were invited by the laird to eat the Whey Brose. This was made by heating the whey pressed from the curd until it thickened, then mixing it with oatmeal and seasoning. It was considered a great treat, and such meals continued for several days, at different houses each day, with each shepherd’s wife striving to produce the best ewe cheese. The laird attended all these functions with guests. Making ewe cheese died out by 1850, but prior to that it was often sold in Hawick shops.

## Leaving Henwoodie: where and why

“In the early 1850s, rural depression in the aftermath of the potato failure of the 1840s coincided with a sluggish Scottish urban economy and the glittering attractions of gold discoveries and other opportunities overseas. In these years 24 per cent of the young men who had been in their late teens in 1851 left Scotland. The loss of young men between 1851 and 1861 was higher than between 1911 and 1921, years that had included the massive mortality of the First World War. In the 1850s, of all the counties of Scotland, only West Lothian saw net in-migration of men from this 15-19 age group, while 22 counties, including almost all those with any significant high ground, saw losses of one-third or more.” *Anderson, M and Morse D J in People and Society in Scotland Vol 2, 1830-1914, Ed Hamish Fraser and Morris R J, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1990.*

This summary applies in every detail to the Armstrongs who left Henwoodie: the right ages, the right period, the high ground, and the lure of Australia, both for sheep and gold!

When did they go? By 1871 not one of the family remained in Henwoodie or in Robertson. Henwoodie was occupied by an entirely different family, confusingly named Armstrongs, but seemingly unrelated.

My great-grandfather Thomas – the first-born, 1825 -who settled in Dumfriesshire, has disappeared from home and the parish by 1851. His sister went north, and married Kerr Armstrong (b Cavers c 1825 d Mussel 4th Sep 1893) at Thurso 1st Sep 1854. Jane died in 1859 aged 30, Margaret died in June. 1861, aged 22.

The rest went with their brother James to Fowler’s Bay in South Australia. They were not the first of their family or friends to go. Barbara Armstrong’s husband, Robert Linton, had a relative who had emigrated forty years earlier to Tasmania, and drownde there in 1827.

Mary , the mother of this Armstrong family, was a Murray, and many of her immediate relatives were already established and successful in Australia. It was through them that James obtained the offer of a managerial post on a sheep-run which led to their leaving Scotland.

He took with him his parents, Francis and Mary, his younger sisters Esther, Eleanor and Elizabeth, aged respectively 25, 21, and 16, and his young brother John, then 17, who died in December, 1862, shortly after their arrival in Australia.

Three years later, Robert Linton left in 1865-67 from the Thames with a cargo of sheep. His wife, born Barbara Armstrong, and her children left with him or soon followed him.

The stories of James Armstrong and of the Lintons are recorded in separated essays(q.v.)

## POSTSCRIPT

That September day, after I had eaten my packed lunch in the Craik forest carpark, I returned to a very wet Hawick, and took photographs of the house in the main street where Barbara Armstrong had worked as a maid.

I then drove west to Cavers parish to trace my Ingram roots. As at Henwoodie the area seemed deserted. The huge mansion house where my great-grandfather Ingram worked as a coachman was gone except for its gatehouse, the long balustrade which had fronted the house, and a huge mock Gothic stable block. It must have been here that my grandfather, another Malcolm Ingram, had been born. By this time the rain was torrential. Some men were despondently making some roof repairs to the building which is still providing stabling but now for a riding school. I approached them and they confirmed its original purpose, and explained where the mansion house had been sited. A modern ranch type bungalow has been built there.

I drove through flooded roads to Cavers church and to the farm nearby where Robert Linton and Barbara Armstrong met and married, and sat for some time in the car drinking coffee from my flask, and growing increasingly gloomy, reflecting on the weather, the foot-and-mouth disease, the deserted countryside, and the obliterated traces of my family history.

The Armstrongs of Henwoodie, and their ancestors, are true exemplars of historical and economic forces. They seem always to have lived in remote and difficult areas. They had come from such wild countryside in Northumberland, and they left Henwoodie for the wild west of South Australia, where Fowler's Bay was, and is, where wilderness and desert begin. Even the excellent local history of that area is entitled 'Life on the Edge.' The forest has destroyed that way of life at Henwoodie, but only because it was in any case doomed. And even in Australia's Fowler's Bay, the sheep which made them relatively wealthy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have gone, as have the herds, and the area is bleak.

More has been written about the Highland Clearances than about the history of the Lowlands. In the Borders there were few if any forceful evictions by harsh landlords, but the same result from the even more remorseless tread of economic change. Seen against these factors the Armstrongs seem the puppets of historical change. But it is a source of wonder that these men and women in the remotest of areas had the courage and enterprise as well as the intelligence and information needed to throw up their small but hard-earned progress, and venture around the globe. Everything points to them using extensive networks of friends and families for guidance and mutual support. Born in a later era, they would have been able to seek further education and have much wider educational opportunity. This did not take place until my parent's generation, when some of the family would move to Dumfries, Edinburgh, and Newcastle in search of work, my mother to become a clerkess, her brother Frank to begin a distinguished police career, and brother Alex to work with cars and open his own garage. Her sister Ella went into domestic service as a lady's maid in Dumfriesshire, and brother Tom, gassed in the first world war, was forced to return from police service and work on the land through ill-health. The next generation left even fewer locally and working in agriculture – a nursing sister, two doctors and two dentists, scattered across Britain, a post office worker one farm worker remaining in the Lockerbie area.

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