

## **The Story of an East Lothian Farm**

by Tom Middlemass

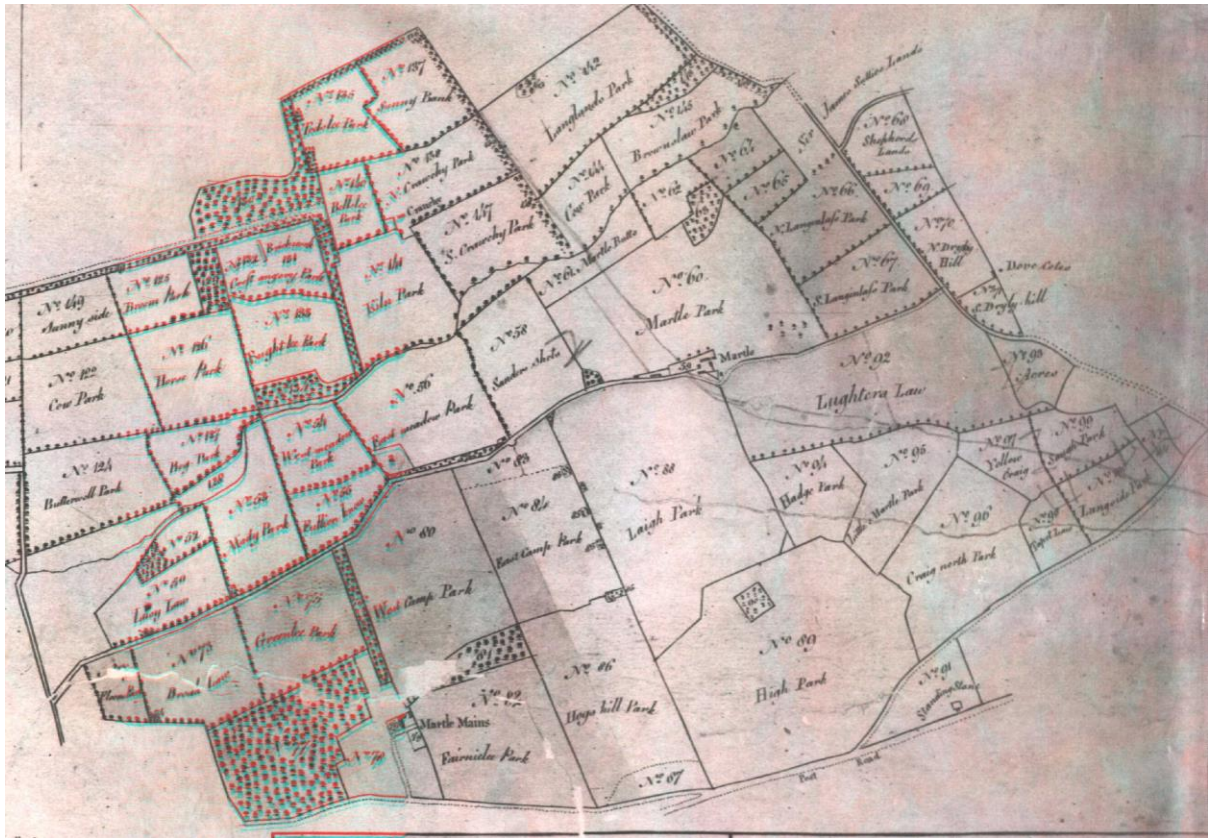
*A talk delivered to the Society on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2001. Some images and captions from his Power Point presentation have been added.*

Markle Mains is where I have lived all my life and as I grow older it has become very apparent to me that I am only a very small cog in the wheel of stewardship, especially when I look at the history of those gone before.

Markle Mains is situated on the little road which leads through from Athelstaneford over the level crossing to East Linton. The name Markle itself has had many variations in spelling since it was first recorded as Merkshulle in 1312. Indeed even on the title deeds of the farm, it is referred to as Merkhill and Martlehill. Those who study place names tell me the name probably comes from the Old English words *mearc* and *hyll* meaning boundary and hill – being close to the ridge of Pencraig. I must also say that I think the legend that the name was derived from the word ‘miracle’, from the miracle of the cross in the sky at the battle of Athelstaneford in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, is rather a nice little story too.

In the very early recorded history the lands of Markhill belonged to the Hepburns, who owned much of the land in the parish of Prestonkirk, including Hails and Waughton, the lands being given over in favour of David Kinloch when the land then became part of Gilmerton estate in 1747.

Markle Mains then was not as we know it today; it was a small farm which shows up on the Gilmerton estate map of 1767 up on the higher land near Pencraig where the Markle quarry now operates. The old map shows the farm standing there to be a house and a small steading.



*This is a map of Markle, Markle Mains and Crauchie dated 1787 showing the names of all the fields. Examples of field names on this map range from names which are self explanatory such as Lucylaw, Greenlaw, Broadlaw and Fernylea, Sauch park, and Butterwell, to Langinglass, Tosenose, Mady and Camps which are a bit different.*



*Markle Mains on Forrest's Map of Haddingtonshire 1799 © NLS*

There is a tombstone in Prestonkirk churchyard giving details of James Ranken, who died in 1783 aged 84, his son, George Ranken, and a James Finlayson, who died in 1814, all showing in the inscriptions that they were farmers at Markle Mains. James Finlayson must have been related to the Rankens, his name being on the same tombstone.

I also have a copy of 'The Farmer's Magazine' of 1803 showing James Finlayson's name in the frontispiece. 'The Farmer's Magazine' was published for a run of about 25 years around 1800 and was edited by James Finlayson's neighbour, Robert Brown of Markle, a prominent agriculturist at that time and a contemporary of George Rennie of Phantassie and Andrew Meikle of Houston Mill.

The next chapter in the story shows the farmer who farmed all the land of Markle, Markle Mains and Crauchie, going bust in 1829. He was John Rennie, a son of George Rennie of Phantassie and a nephew of John Rennie, the famous architect. At that time the estate must have decided to have a re-organisation.

An advert appeared in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of August 14<sup>th</sup> 1830. A roup was to held at Markle offering, amongst other things, 'an excellent STEAM ENGINE' which was part of the sequestered estate of John Rennie.

Just below the advertisement for the roup, the farms previously tenanted by Rennie were offered to let. Either two or three farms could be formed and a new steading would be built at Markle Mains, In the event, the fields were reorganised and three farms, Markle, Markle Mains and Crauchie, were formed; new steadings, farmhouses and cottages being built at Markle Mains and Crauchie.

In 1830 a new tenant came to the new farm of Markle Mains with its new house and steading, He was David Hardie and came with his wife and eight children from Thornhill in Fife, David Hardie died in 1856 and his son David continued until 1880, when he took a lease at Bielgrange – he must have thought this a move forward.

Now you would think that I couldn't know very much about a family who left Markle Mains about 120 years ago. Quite the contrary. In the last 30 years or so I have built up quite a picture of this family and its descendants. In 1862 two sons emigrated from Markle Mains to New Zealand, also a daughter ended up in the United States.

The story of the two brothers is quite remarkable. They were only 17 and 19 when they left Markle Mains, each having been given £1000 by the family. Once in New Zealand the fact that they had money enabled them to move quickly and when they bought their plot of land in North Island, they were able

to hire man to build a sawmill to saw the timber they were clearing from their land. So starting an empire of farming and sawmilling all run from their farm which they called Markle Mains.

The first of the descendants to appear back in Scotland in the early 1970s wrote a small book about his family, including their origins at Markle Mains, and since the distribution of this book we have had a steady trickle of other descendants appearing from all over the world. Indeed there is now a worldwide organisation called the Thornhill Society, all descendants of the man who came to Markle Mains in 1830.

Quite recently with the advent of email and the fact that the results of the Prestonkirk Burial Ground Survey are on the Internet, I have had a lot of communication from Hardies all over the world. I recently received from New Zealand a copy of a photograph of the David Hardie who died in 1856 and also from the United States a photo of an oil painting of his wife, Christina, a painting which must have hung in the drawing room of Markle Mains.

The next period of about 10 years from 1880 finds the farmer to be W.Y. Davidson. I know little about him other than he moved to Northumberland to the large farm of Beal near Morpeth in 1891. I remember being at a farm sale at Beal about 30 years ago when the Davidsons gave up there.

The next farmer who came, in 1891, to Markle Mains was William Middlemass who came from Jedburgh. He followed his brother Adam Middlemass who had come to Crauchie 15 years previously.

Wull Middlemass, as he was known, was a big man, well over 6 feet tall and reputed to weigh the same a Wall bag of barley all his life. He was over 60 when he came but his sons, I am sure, were go-ahead individuals. He had three sons and a daughter. The oldest son, John Middlemass, also a great big man, was a cattle dealer who lived in Dale House in Haddington and later took the farm of Northrig near Morham, which was on the Wemyss estate.



*This is William Middlemass of Markle Mains, his wife, daughter and 2 sons in the 1890's. Tom on the horse was my grandfather, who took West Bearford in 1898 but who died aged only 38 in 1908*

The other two sons, Bill and Tom, lived at Markle Mains and in 1898 Tom, my grandfather, was married to the niece of a baker in East Linton and took the farm of West Bearford near Morham, which was also on the Wemyss estate. At that time there were plenty of farms available for let due to the system of 7 year leases in operation and there was a fair movement of farmers in and out of farms.

Bill Middlemass, who remained a bachelor, continued to farm after his father's death in 1907 and also helped to look after the farm of West Bearford after his brother Tom, my grandfather, died in 1908. This situation continued until 1916 when he took a stroke and became very disabled, giving up his tenancy of Markle Mains to a farmer called James Peace who took a 7 year lease at that time. James Peace was the father of Jack Peace who is now at the Coates. Indeed Jack Peace was born at Markle Mains.

In the meantime, Bill Middlemass moved to East Linton and was later, in 1921, able to buy Markle Mains from Gilmerton Estates for his nephew

William, who had been brought up in West Bearford. We are now getting a little bit closer to where we are today – William Middlemass was my father.

The title deeds are most interesting. Even in 1921 they are very extensive going into great detail about entailed and unentailed land. How the entailed land was available for sale I don't really understand but the farm was offered in two parts, the entailed land for £3250 and the unentailed land for £2750, making a total of £6000.

Attached to the land there was a considerable feu duty payable to the Dean of the Chapel Royal and because of this a 10% reduction in the asking price was negotiated! The feu duty was very precise in its make-up:

*13 quarters, 3 bushels, 1 gallon and 6 tenths quarts of wheat,*

*21 quarters, 5 bushels, 1 peck and 8 tenths quarts of barley,*

*14 quarters, 6 bushels, 3 pecks, 1 gallon and 9 tenths quarts oats,*

*7 hens and 14 pullets!*

In total this amounts to about 10 tons of grain.

Each year the value of these amounts of farm produce was calculated and paid but some time later, I am not sure when, the value was set at £92 per year. This was a considerable burden at that time and indeed the feu duty was paid annually until around 20 years ago when it was redeemed for £600.

There were also the usual details of the stipend payable to the Minister of Prestonkirk, made up of

*3 bolls, 9 stones and 8 pounds of meal,*

*2 bolls, 2 firlots, 2 pecks of pease,*

*2 quarters, 7 bushels, 1 and 6 tenths quarts of barley,*

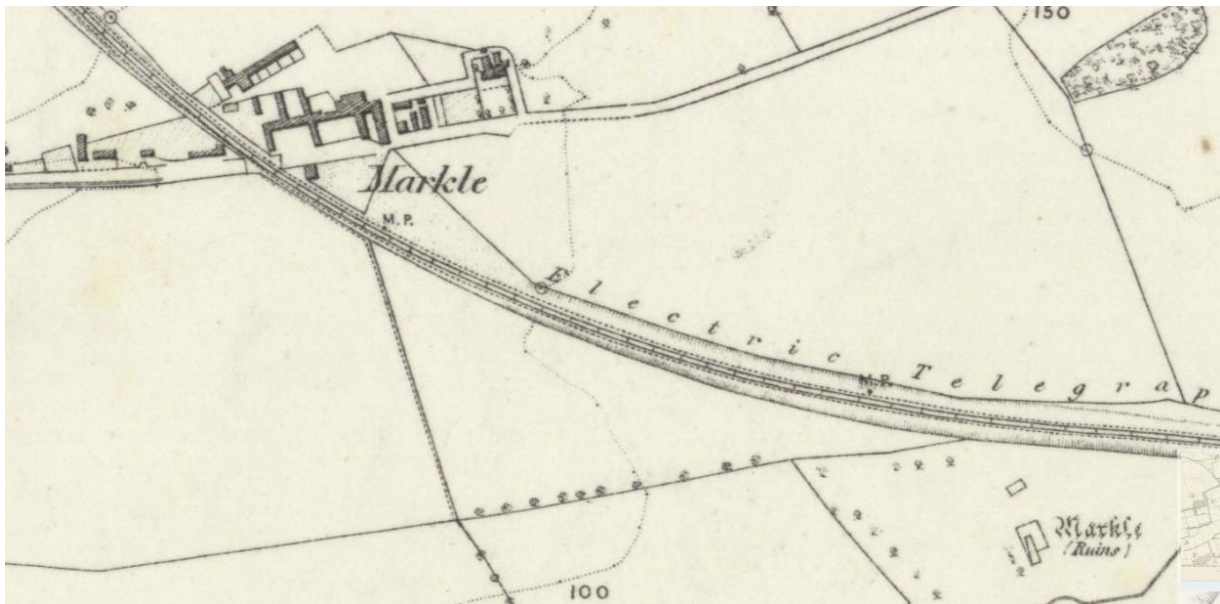
*1 bushel, 1 gallon, 3 and 5 tenths quarts of wheat,*

*4 shillings and 6 pence farthing of money.*

Well there it was. My father had to wait two years until the lease of Messrs Peace ran out in 1923 and we have continued to farm since, my father until 1967 and myself since, now in partnership with my son – yet another William.

What changes to the farm itself have we seen. When I was a youngster and up until around 1970, the farm buildings were exactly as they were since being built in the 1830s. I have a plan of the steading showing alterations in 1870 when the west range of cattle courts were built. They were unusual in that

the middle roof is built on the cantilever principle, covering the troughs and being built on the central wall.



*Markle Mains from Ordnance Survey Haddingtonshire, Sheet 5, surveyed in 1853. © NLS*

There were cattle at Markle Mains until 1980 and these buildings were used for that purpose until then. The original buildings formed a large square with open cattle courts in the centre. In the profitable 70s new buildings were blended with the old so from the outside the steading looks just as it always did but within it had been adapted to meet the requirements of modern methods.

Cottages, originally ten in number, were altered to make seven in 1930 when the indoor lavyies were installed. Unfortunately, however, these opened off the kitchens so were condemned in the 1960s with a subsequent restoration and renovation of these seven cottages into four in the 70s.

Many alterations have been made to the landscape over the years. Over forty acres of woodland have been restored to arable use. Most of the field we call the Braeface was woodland until the First War when the felling started, continuing up to the Second War and my father began the removal of roots by digging them out using prisoners of war. The roots were dragged down to the edge, presumably with Fordson tractors, and left there. There followed bulldozer work in the 50s when more roots were dug out and windrowed. The job was completed in the early 70s when all the trees were cleared and all the roots transported to one of the several quarry holes up on the top land. Two miles of derelict drystone dykes were put back into these old quarries. I presume from where they had come two hundred years before when the land was first enclosed. Some fences and hedges were also taken away to make larger fields.

There used to be twenty-two fields averaging around twenty-five acres each. Now there are five fields averaging one hundred acres each, that including land bought in 1983, again from the Kinlochs of Gilmerton, when the farm increased by one hundred acres to five hundred and sixty acres.

There have been other alterations to the landscape too, mainly done in the 1980s. When I bought the hundred acres, it was at the tail end of the time when there was still governmental encouragement in the form of grants to maximise the area of arable land. It is hard to believe now when we are suffering from overproduction of almost everything and when conservation is in vogue.

Much of this newly acquired land up near Pencraig was very rocky. With the help of grants I did a bit of bulldozer work to level out and bury the rocks, bringing about twenty acres of hitherto unploughable acres into arable land and production at the same time eliminating an area where rabbits had become a big problem. Any crib growing was cleared first and burnt. A large bulldozer dig an enormous hold along the bottom of the slope where there was plenty of depth. The rocks were dozed into the hole and the soil spread over trying to make sure there was at least three foot of soil over the area. There were still many surface stones to lift and twenty years later we still have quite a few to lift as they tend to ride to the surface!

The following year the drainage was attend to, mainly catching springs along the lower edge of the embankment.

One way of removing derelict dykes was to dig a large hole alongside, pull it in, and bury it! The state of dykes had been deteriorating for years and many had fences alongside to keep them stockproof. Perhaps the catalyst to making the decision to remove them was when the Irishman who came every year to repair them suddenly announced one day that he “wasn’t coming back next year – the stones were all three-cornered”!

The way we farm has changed greatly too from being a mixed farm fifty years ago which had all forms of livestock. There were lots of sheep, a five hundred half-bred ewe flock, as well as lambs bought in and fattened in the winter.





*Clipping at Markle Mains in the 1890's – sadly I don't know any to the participants. They are not recognisable as Middlemass's from the few family photos which we have. The lady may be my great grandmother bringing out the refreshments but I really couldn't be sure*

It really is a great shame that I have few photographs to illustrate this particular part of the story. One of my father and the shepherd, Archie Lambert, is the sum total of the photographic evidence of Archie having worked at Markle Mains for more than sixty years – a good and faithful servant. To describe the hard work he must have put in during all these years with words alone isn't possible. For example, he would spend weeks every year in all weather cutting turnips for the hogs.

There were pigs too, not kept as they are now, in totally enclosed premises. In the 50s we had about forty sows, selling most of the progeny as weaners.



*My father with some of his large white sows. He kept the dry sows outside.*

In the good old days, just like the rhyme says, not all little pigs went to market. Some did stay at home but this was because they were killed and cured at home. I remember well the ritual killing of the pig: the fuss there was beforehand getting the copper lit to provide the hot water and all the various saws and knives and cleavers sharpened and ready. I remember exactly how the pig was dispatched, although I won't go into detail here; how it was plucked in an old bath to get rid of the hair; how it was eviscerated and what was done with all the 'bits' and then hung up in the place still remembered as the killing house. This whole performance was masterminded by Archie. I can picture him yet with his sleeves rolled up, ballpein hammer in one hand, sharp knife in the other, ready to do the necessary deed.

The next day my father and Archie would cut up the pig and cure the sides and hams. It is only recently, well maybe ten years ago, that the ham hooks were taken out of our kitchen ceiling. I can remember eight or nine hams hanging in their muslin bags from these hooks.

Of course all the men who worked on the farm had a pig too, kept in the pig craves near the cottages. In fact, they usually kept two, one to kill and one to sell, this being one of the perks of the job. This is, of course, not done nowadays. It is illegal to kill any animal outside an authorised slaughterhouse or abattoir.

There were cattle, feeding cattle and sucklers, as well as a house cow. Few farmers have a house cow now. The milk was brought into the milkhouse in the heavy galvanised milk pail and emptied into the basins on the slate shelves of the milkhouse so that it could stand and allow the cream to rise. The cream was then skimmed and I remember my mother making butter and always telling everyone how important it was to keep all the utensils scrupulously clean because, unless they were, the butter would have a taste.

There were several hundred hens – ‘gaun about hens’ – all scratching about the farmyard and laying away in the stackyard in the bale sacks. They were given mash as a feed and could get access to any grass around which, of course, helped the yolks have the right colour. It’s not like that now, is it? Now it is all deep litter or battery cages and, of course, much paler eggs.

My father would set clockers [broody hens] in spring to produce the next batch or boxes of chickens arrived from the hatchery by train and were reared in a paraffin brooder. Well I remember the occasional tragedy when they all suffocated because they had huddled together when the brooder temperature wasn’t high enough.

In my memory, and before I remember, there was a diverse number of crops: oats, barley, wheat, turnips, potatoes, sugar beet, mangolds, kale, hay and silage. Just after the war the farm employed eight men and casuals, wartime especially bringing all manner of different casual workers.

At Markle Mains during the war there were many different people who came to work. Much of the grassland of the farm, indeed the county, had been ploughed up to grow wheat, oats and potatoes, so a much greater casual labour force was needed. Father used to employ off-duty airmen based at East Fortune airfield, and it wasn’t long before prisoners of war and the like were coming to help with harvest, potato lifting, singling, shawing and the like. There was also a cottage full of Italian POWs, three or four working on the farm and one who kept house and prepared the food – mainly rabbit. There was a German POW called Gerard. I’m not sure if I remember him or is it his photo I remember but I still have the pokerwork wooden dachshund dog which he made for me.

Another form of help was, of course, the Women’s Land Army. They were based in a large house in North Berwick and employed by many farmer in the area.

I am really just a year or two too young to have any reminiscences of my own of our war years. Around 1950 is the time my own memory comes into play. Our workhorse stable has twelve stalls and a loosebox. The harness was all hung up on the back wall, the pulleys and ropes for the stable lamps, the corn

kist for the bruised oats, the enamel basin in the corn kist. Fifty years ago and its kits all so clear in my memory. The largest number of horses on the farm I recall was five: two pairs of Clydesdales and Paddy, the odd horse. Before the days of tractors, the farm was run with four pairs and two odd horses. Our last work horse went away in 1958.

The first tractor had arrived in 1936, a Fordson. Various Fordsons, a Case, and several 3-wheeler John Deeres followed in the late 30s and the early part of the war as part of the American Lease-Lend agreement. One of my earliest memories is the arrival in 1948 of a new John Deere tractor, SS 6844. I still have it. Little 'Grey Fergies' and the Fordson Major were just the bees knees to buy in the late 40s and early 50s. We've come a long way since the days of the first Fordson. A 25hp Fordson could perhaps plough three acres a day where we now expect to plough 25 or 30 acres per day with a 200hp tractor.



*A three wheeler rowcrop John Deere model A, which arrived in Britain in 1948. It is still on the farm although a bit rusty now, sitting rather sadly with a flat front tyre.*



*Tractors of course were useful for jobs other than tractive operations. Here at Markle Mains in 1954 a Fordson major with a belt pulley is seen powering a sawbench at the cottages. Jack Mason is the one with the bunnet and Will Glass bottom right. It's amazing what memories a picture like this sparks off when you see it. The tractor has a Winsam cab, a luxury in its day, its nearside rear wheel is fitted with Bowden Strakes and in the bottom picture, note the two wartime air raid shelters. Then look at the sawbench, the safety man would not be at all happy with the unguarded saw blade.*

Before the days of the combine, the stackyard was full of stacks of corn. They were either sow stacks or built on twenty wrought iron stathels for round stacks, designed to keep the stacks off the ground and free from vermin. Since coming in 1923, my father used the same Massey Harris binders, which were even older than that, right up until 1960.



*Iron stathel still in use at the Museum of Scottish Country Life.*

Alas again I have no photos of harvesting at Markle Mains with the binder. In 1960, the last year my father used the binder, my father made me build a stack. I can clearly remember his instructions as I placed each sheaf, “Keep it high in the middle, Thomas. Or it’ll never keep out the water”!

On many farms these stacks of grain were threshed, either by a travelling threshing mill hired from Wyllies of Haddington, or in our case at Markle Mains using the travelling mill shared with Northrig and Howmuir. We also had a threshing mill built into the barn, made by Bridges of North Berwick at the same time as a wall-mounted steam engine was installed to replace the horse gin, which had been the first source of power for the barn machinery. I have no documentation to prove that was the date other than my father telling me that someone had told him that the built-in mill and steam engine were installed in 1856 at the same time as the horse mill open sides were built in and a chimney built for the steam engine. I can remember the indoor mill working. Isn’t it remarkable that it should have been in used for over a hundred years.



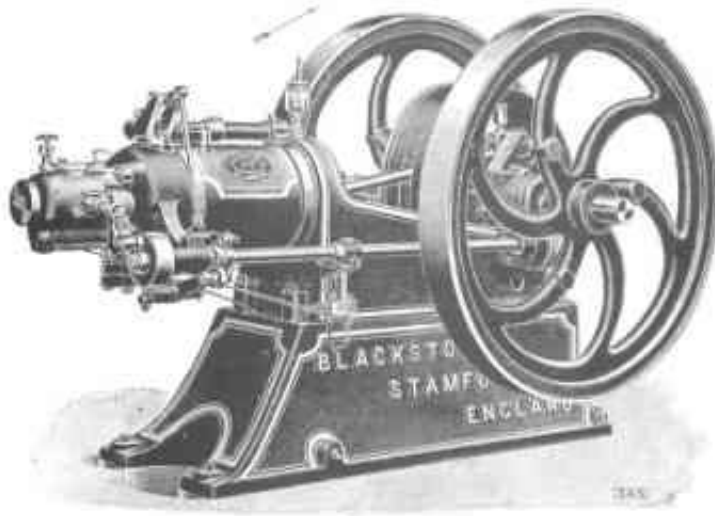
*When the farms of Markle, Markle Mains and Crauchie on Gilmerton Estate had a make-over in 1830, horse mills or horse gins were the fashion, and were a great improvement on having to wait for a wind to drive the barn machinery.*

*Later, around the late 1850's , the horsemills were converted to steam engine houses and chimneys built. This photo is of the steading at Markle Mains showing the chimney breast but not the chimney itself because it had become unsafe and was dismantled between the wars.*

*In 1856 there was a Sked Steam Engine put in to drive the Bridges of North Berwick built-in threshing mill, the bruiser, straw chopper and grinder.*

The steam engine was replaced in 1924 with a Blackstone hot bulb oil engine and for this I do have documentation. It was bought from Thomas Sheriff of West Barns at a cost of £100. In turn it was replaced by electric motors in the 1960s.

*All Fixed Engines run as shown by Arrow, unless specially ordered.*



*Always give number on Name-plate when writing about Engines or ordering spare parts.*

The first combine had arrived at Markle Mains in 1949 – a Massey Harris 726 which bagged the grain on the combine and dropped sixteen-stone bags off in the field to be uplifted later. We progressed from this to an Allis Chalmers gleaner; then over the years with several Claas. We have a red one at the moment. I think with each combine bought the combining capacity doubled. The first Massey Harris could do about three tonnes per hour; our latest anything up to thirty tonnes per hour.





*The first combine at Markle Mains in 1949. This Massey Harris 726 combine with a Raussendorf straw press, had been built in and imported from USA. Here it is harvesting barley in the field called Greenlaw at Markle Mains in 1954, my father walking along behind checking for two things, firstly that there is no grain being left on the ground and also making sure that the knotters on the straw press are actually tying!*



*This is the same combine, which when it arrived on the farm had a wooden bat reel at the front, but this was soon replaced by a tined pickup reel to help lift*

*any laid crop. It must have been a cold day for the driver Jack Mason because he is wearing his army great coat, gloves and has arranged some railway bags to protect his knees. This was a bagger combine which dressed the grain and filled the bags. You can just see 2 bags in the chute before being deposited on the ground which then had to be uplifted by hand on to a trailer and taken back to the farm.*



*The first Massey Harris could perhaps cut one acre of barley or 2 tonnes per hour, whereas this Case combine, which we use today, can reach 30 tonnes per hour on a good day in a big crop. The Massey Harris in 1949 cost £1000. To buy a Case combine today, albeit with a much greater output would cost £100,000.*

There was a time when all calculations were done in the back of my father's pocket diary and when book-keeping was almost non-existent. When the farmer would employ a grieve to do the day to day running of the farm while he swanned off to either East Linton or Haddington fat stock market on a Monday, Gorgie fat stock market on a Tuesday, Edinburgh store sale and corn market on a Wednesday. There would be times when he just had to go to St Boswells on a Thursday and always to Haddington Corn Exchange and the bank on a Friday.



*This is my father William Middlemass in the Corn Exchange at Haddington in the mid-fifties looking on as the grain merchant J.D. Martin examines a sample of barley which my father was offering for sale.*

*Based on the look of the sample and the history of the crop, he would bid by father there and then for the lot, perhaps 100 bags or 10 tons.*

*The merchant would have perhaps twenty smaller breweries or maltings to whom he could sell, not like nowadays, where there are only two or three. Although the corn market no longer exists, and there are many fewer merchants, the deal is done in a similar way, the merchants coming to the farm and taking samples of the barley or wheat to be sold. However nowadays it is tested not just by the look and the history, but for nitrogen content, protein level, moisture content, Hagberg count, specific (formerly bushel) weight and more, before a price is agreed. And instead of 10 or 20 tons being in a lot there could be several hundred tonnes.*

There was a time when my mother had help in the house every day and there was a man who helped in the garden. Petrol was 5/- a gallon and tractor

fuel was 1/3 a gallon. The electricity bill was £12 10/-, the phone bill £5 7/9 and we sold our barley for 70/- per quarter.

In a gradual progression in these last fifty years I have seen many changes. Nowadays the farm is very different with no livestock and only wheat, barley and oilseed being grown. There are two men employed and if they left they would not be replaced. We have vast reserves of horsepower to enable us to get the work done timeously. We spray every crop perhaps five times; we do the harvesting and seeding for other farmers; we have myriads of paperwork to complete; we have a computer programme to do the books; I write about four hundred cheques a year settling accounts and receive only about ten per year in payment of our produce.

I know that sometimes great use is made of statistics to emphasise a point. I make no apology in telling you this one. Four years ago when barley was £120 a tonne and petrol was 45p/litre, I could fill my car four times for a tonne of barley. Today with barley valued at £65 and petrol at 75p/litre, if it is really empty I can fill my car once with that same tonne.

Perhaps the most radical change in my lifetime at Markle Mains was the opening of Markle Quarry, first in 1980 by Lothian Region Highways Department who spent a great deal of public money setting up the project, opening the quarry with all its infrastructure of roads, equipment and buildings. Alas they were unable to make a go of it and the quarry closed in 1985. There followed a long legal wrangle which lasted ten years but once this was settled the quarry was let and is now operated by a most efficient firm of quarriers who in the first six months of their operation extracted more stone than the Region had in the five years they were operating.

There has been much talk in the agricultural industry of maximising use of the assets you have or diversifying to try to bring in extra income. There are lots of different ideas around: doing work for other farmers as I have mentioned, farmhouse bed and breakfast, letting cottages, letting farm buildings for industrial purposes, having a bullock killed and packaged for the farmers' market, growing organic crops – hopefully for a better price. Every week in the 'Farmer's Weekly' there is a report of someone trying something new or different.

For ten years between 1986 and 1996 I built up a reasonably successful tree-growing sideline. But at the end of the day there really was little money in it and William and I appeared to be the ones who were doing all the work, especially at weekends, so a decision was made to cease trading. There was also the scenario that the tail was wagging the dog and the cropping side of the

business was suffering because of the need to deal with tree customers sometimes taking an hour to make up their mind to buy a tree for £1 50p when really what we should have been doing was attending timeously to spraying or the like.

There has however been, to my mind, a great benefit to the farm because of the tree selling enterprise. I have planted about seven acres of shelter and amenity areas round the farm steading as well as many roadside and hedgerow trees. In a way I do hope this is compensating for the removal of the woods, hedges and dykes which has been done on the farm in the last fifty years.

This recent tree planting has made me realise just how much work had been put into the landscape by our forefathers. A number of years ago I caught sight of the two-hundred year-old Gilmerton Estate forestry record book, which I found to be really interesting reading, especially the parts referring to Markle Mains. All the various woods and coverts, hedges and hedgerow trees were recorded at that time, and having seen this I tried to do something similar, recording the many different species of trees in the various areas I have planted and also details of the specimens and collections I have put in.

I have also kept a photographic record of the progress of the plantings and am amazed at the rate of growth and the change it has made visually as well as adding wildlife.

Well there you have it – a potted history of Markle Mains. I think I am just about up to date. It seems a very abrupt stop but what we are doing today is actually the history of tomorrow.