

Chapter I

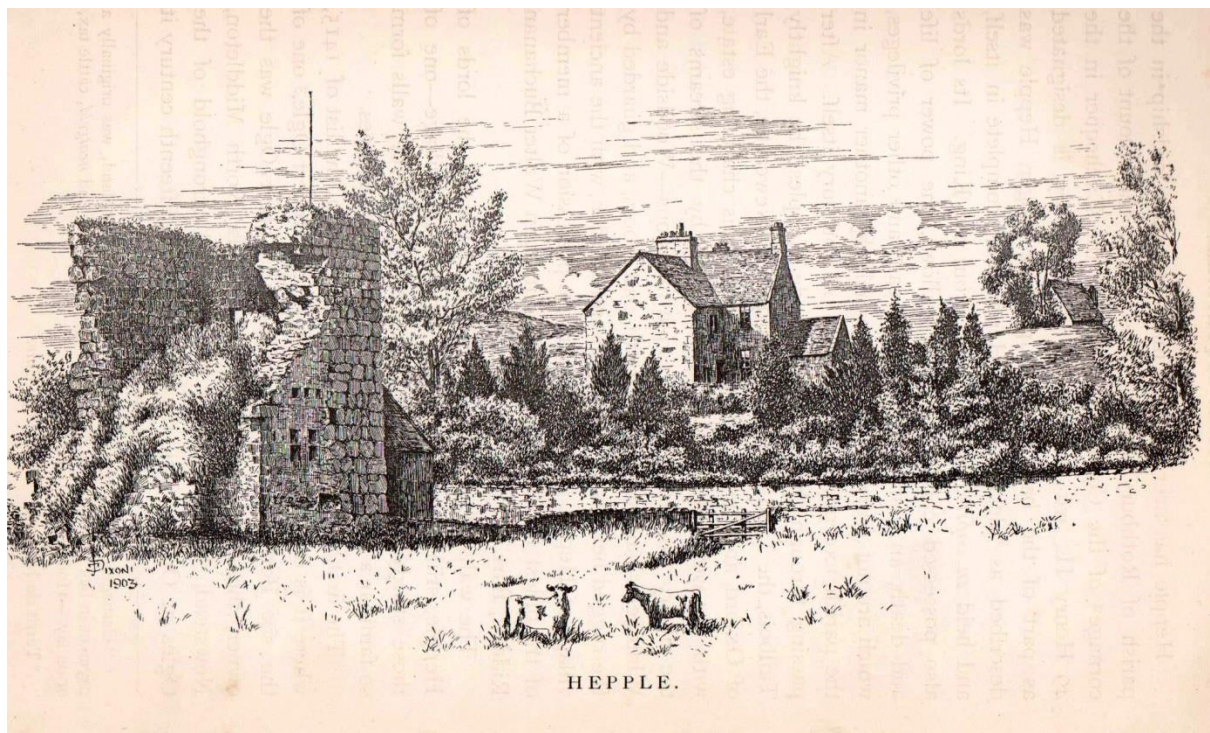
Genealogy

I dealt with genealogy when I wrote my pictographic 'family histories' compiled from very old sepia photographs collected and retained by Diana. I propose not to repeat the same old repertoire. However I think this memoir would be incomplete without some reference to inherited DNA?

Paternal

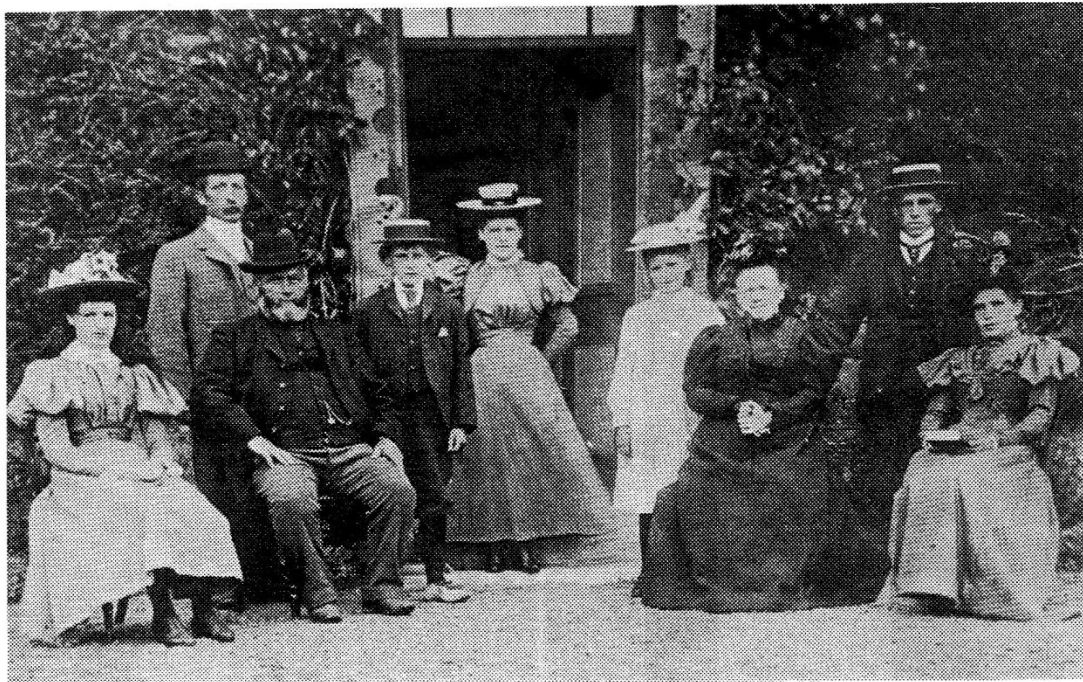
With limited resources and lack of dedication to in-depth detailed family research the story of the Howey male line is relatively undistinguished. As far as I know we are from a long line of staunch yeoman farming stock established in the North of England. One unconfirmed explanation states that the original founder came over from Normandy in 1068; about two years after William's successful conquest. The name 'Howey' shares its origin with many other brands including Howie, Howe, Heugh, Hoey, Haugh and several others. Apparently the Norman potentate was known as 'The Man on the Hill'; the name reflecting his pre-eminent position in the social hierarchy. Regrettably the progression seems to have been downhill for about the next 1000 years! I took my chance and left.

Hepple Village has a long distinguished history very well documented in David Dippie Dixon's epic tome 'Upper Coquetdale'.



This dated image shows the Pele Tower, Vicarage and Church in the background. The former goes back many hundreds of years while the latter two were built in the late 19th Century. They were the result of the largesse of the presiding premier family the Riddells of Hepple Whitefield. All this was very familiar to me in my early days. The Pele Tower and grounds were considered part of East Hepple Farm although this was actually not the case. It was 'borrowed' territory and an exciting adventurous playground

The grazing cows in the foreground might well have been the property of the Howey family? I recall being tossed into a bed of nettles by a newly calved Ayrshire 'Rosie' who took exception to my close proximity to Dad who was checking the newborn calf. It's assumed she thought I was a dog! I was lucky. 'Rosie' had very long curved horns. I must have been about 3 or 4 years old. There was also an old granary behind the Pele Tower. A few of us caused a fearful row by having a pillow fight amongst the stored oats. The feather pillows burst of course distributing vast quantities of downy feathers throughout the oats. Nana saved the day by sifting through it by hand. I was lucky to escape with a severe reprimand and 'early to bed' without supper. Some others were not so fortunate!



WESTHEPPLE farmhouse, about 1890, John Howey (grandfather of Miss Peggy and Mrs Ena Howey) is seated left of the front door, his wife, Mary, sits opposite in black silk and bonnet. Their children, left to right, are Margaret (later Mrs Ralph Hall), William, John, Mary (later Mrs Tom Tully of the Railway Hotel, Rothbury), Isabel (Mrs Hector Herdman), James (father of Peggy, Ena Bolam and Edwin Howey of West Hepple) and Elizabeth.

Recent iterations of the Howey clan originated at West Hepple as depicted in the photograph. Grandfather William Howey is the grandee back left with the bowler hat and droopy moustache. He was known as a very fine and gentle generous man. I only very vaguely remember him.

William Howey later acquired neighbouring East Hepple Farm while younger brother James became established at West Hepple. I always wondered about the primogeniture justice of this inheritance? I know it always rankled with Dad. It could have had something to do with James marrying a Clarke of Cartington. It's just possible this brought with it a better 'dowry' than did William's marriage to my grandmother Hannah Robinson of Bishop Auckland. Diana thinks our grandmother was 'in service' with the Riddells at Hepple Whitefield. The Clarke family were well known for their 'canny' thrift, strong work ethic and sobriety allied to a profound abstemious Christian faith.

Aunty Ena Howey insisted that the Howey family had been in and around Hepple Village for over 400 years? Without trying too hard I have been unable to verify this fact. It may well be correct.



East Hepple was home for my first 20+ years. On reflection I was lucky although I did not always appreciate it. At the farm we were just a rung or two higher than the general working population. Even at this level caste or class counted. The Beattie (Garage & Shop) and Rogerson (Carpenter/Undertaker) families owned their own businesses. Others were either farm labourers (Foggons) or employed in varying capacities by the Riddells at Hepple Whitefield (Whitfields). We were tenant farmers but produced milk, butter, cream, chickens, eggs, turkeys, ducks, geese, mutton, lamb, wool and all manner of fodder and cash crops. We did not go hungry even during the vicissitudes of war time food rationing. Every householder was encouraged to grow their own vegetables in abundant garden space. Much was provided in this way. Henry Whitfield also produced honey from his entrepreneurial bee keeping enterprise. There was admirable self-sufficiency; especially during wartime and winter hiatus. Bread was home baked.

Scant professionals included the teacher at Hepple Church of England Primary School where a house was provided. The resident Vicar or Parson lived in the Vicarage near the Pele Tower. A blacksmith or farrier travelled to his 'forge' by pushbike from Thropton. Miss Clarke was the postmistress at the Post Office near Hepple Bridge. Other cottages were occupied either by retirees or Whitefield employees.

Maternal

Mother was different! Perhaps I should be grateful for hybridisation? It's supposed to produce heterozygous vigour. As family circumstances prevailed Mother was 'victim' of the tragedy of losing her father to consumption at an early and impressionable age. The eldest of three siblings Grandfather Clarke died when mother was 16 and a promising student at Dundalk High School. Youngest brother Uncle Billy told Diana her sobriquet was 'Bossy Clarke'! I can I believe it. The Scots Presbyterian Clarke family had migrated from Scotland on their way to Canada. They travelled no further than County Monaghan and settled around 'Castleblaney' and 'Ballybay'. Grandmother Clarke's maiden name was Wylie.



Grandfather Willie Clarke: 'The Ballybay Piper'



Grandmother Clarke & Diana at East Hepple c. 1956

Grandfather Clarke owned a Jewellers Shop in Ballybay but pride of place was the family farm at Dunmaurice. Without being judgemental Willie Clarke may have been a bit of a 'dreamer'?



Jewellers Shop in Main Street, Ballybay

Nancy, Tom & Bill Clarke

When Grandfather Clarke died mother as the eldest and only girl was sent 'over the water' to seek paid employment in domestic service. This was standard practice at the time. Fortuitously there were the 'right contacts' thanks to Grandfather Clarke's forays to North East England in the world of piping. Mother was placed with a Dentist's family in Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This was a lucky chance in a desirable location and situation. There were three children in the Walker Family all of whom were great friends with mother. The quite well-to-do Walkers had a week-ender at Holystone together with another prominent Jesmond medical family, the Kendalls. This is where Mum and Dad met.



Mother with Gordon Walker and pet tortoise at Jesmond

The outcome was a wedding at Hepple in January 1940 while mother was just 21 and Dad 35.



Edmund Peel William Howey John Howey Nancy Howey Eleanor Howey



Mum, Auntie Eleanor & Uncle Wilkinson Renwick at East Hepple



Howey Family of East Hepple Farm at 'Dunmaurice', Co. Monaghan in 1945

L to R: Diana (5); William (3); Mother (27); Johnny (1) + unidentified local girl

It's just possible the local girl is a relative? I seem to recall that Sheila, who I believe was mother's cousin produced a child possibly out of wedlock? This was another of the 'unmentionables' in families of the time. If true there is a happy ending. Sheila did very well against the odds.



Three generations at 'Dunmaurice' 1945