

John Martin Jackson

Born 14th
December 1920

Celebrating
the last
90 years



This book is
dedicated to my
Father in Law

Chapter 1

Early Days at “Causey Hill Farm”

John Martin Jackson was born just before Christmas on the 14th December 1920 at Causey Hill Farm Hexham, to Joseph & Tamar Teasdale Jackson (nee Robinson). He was a welcome brother to sisters Nora and Eva aged 4yrs and 1½yrs respectively. Tommy, a surviving twin, would complete the family a few years later.



Martin Tommy Nora and Eva

Mrs Jane Anne Jackson as being “widely known among the farming community and the general public of this district.” Advertisements at this time publicising the family dairy in Priestpopple, Hexham, which supplied milk, cream butter and eggs from their dairy farms, confirm why the family were so well known.

Martin’s father also had farming in his blood and was descended from a long line of farmers and lead ore miners, who carved a living from good West Allen soil. Joseph Jackson was born in 1869 at Pinch Park, Mohope near Ninebanks. As Martin celebrates his 90th Birthday, it’s difficult to imagine all the changes that have occurred

Interestingly, Martin’s father Joseph had been married before, but sadly his first wife, Jane Anne Surtees, died at the age of 51 years. This marriage produced three children who were Martin’s half brothers and sisters, namely; Joseph Frederick Jackson, James Collinwood Jackson and Ruby Maud Jackson. At this time the family home was the Rising Sun Farm, which is situated on the Yarridge road only a short distance from Martin’s place of birth. Jane was a widow when she married Martin’s father Joseph on New Year’s Eve 1892 and already had three children; George W. Surtees, Margaret N. Surtees and John T. Surtees respectively aged 9, 7 and 6 years, who became Martin’s step brothers and sister.

A report in the “Hexham Courant” dated April 1915 describes the late

during the intervening 141 years! With the help of Marina Wallace from Farney Shield, Ninebanks – previous home to generations of Jackson’s – we have successfully traced this side of the family back to the mid 1700’s.

Martin’s mother, Tamar Teasdale Robinson, born in 1880 was daughter to a blacksmith and farmer from Slaggyford. She had a total of six brothers and sisters, but was delighted when younger sister Lydia secured a housekeeping job for Tamar at Causey Hill Farm for Jane and Joseph Jackson. Little did Tamar realise at the time that this job was about to change her life forever. Due to the early death of Jane, she would eventually become Joseph’s second wife.

Chapter 2

Life on the farm at “Whitechapel”

Whilst Martin was still a baby, the new family moved to Whitechapel Farm, Haydon Bridge, near the Ridley Hall Estate. His older sister Nora attended school at Beltingham and Martin recalls going to Sunday school at the local Church and being taught by one of the Bowes-Lyon family.

Nora did not stay at the school very long as it didn’t cater for small children. Shaftoe Trust School at Haydon Bridge was ideal for younger children, offering them a better start. Eventually, Martin and all his siblings would attend this school.



Whitechapel Farm

As a young boy on the farm, Martin remembers the time he and a group of children caught a large salmon in the river and carefully carried it home, safely placing it in the stone water trough situated in the farm yard. He was soon persuaded to return the fish to the river as it was the spawning season. Another vivid memory at Whitechapel is Martin's mother entrusting him to feed and care for day old chicks, as well as clean out the henhouses. The experience of tending those fluffy yellow creatures has left him with an aversion to chicken dinners!



Inspecting the farm yard at Whitechapel

Chapter 3

The long walk to “Blossom Hill Farm”

Sadly in early 1931 the owner of Whitechapel, Miss Cruddas, who also owned Haughton Castle at Barrasford, decided to sell the farm to the Usher family of Bardon Mill, forcing Joseph to seek alternative work and a new home.

Fortunately at the May term, a tenant farmer was required at Blossom Hill Farm on the Allendale road near Hexham. Happily for the Jackson family a large farmhouse went with the job. At the tender age of 10 years, walking by his father's side, Martin helped drive a flock of sheep from Whitechapel to Blossom Hill, a distance of approximately 8 miles.

Bagraw School at Lowgate was very close to Blossom Hill and for a short time Martin attended under the headship of Martin Watson. Although a simple wooden construction, it still stands today and was within walking distance of the farm.

Joseph was doing well on the farm, purchasing tongue and groove boards from Haydon Bridge to make two new hen houses. The young family were now growing up and Nora, who had just left school, was responsible for collecting all the hens' eggs and carrying them down the long hill into Hexham market place to sell. In her spare time she enjoyed riding the ponies.

Martin remembers that year at Blossom Hill as a happy, prosperous time. Regrettably, life was about to change for everyone. Frederick Jackson, who was Joseph's son from his first marriage, had, according to Nora gambled a lot of money at the dog races. After plying his father with a few drinks, he persuaded him to sign as "Guarantor" for the loan. As a result Joseph was forced to "sell up" to pay off all the money and honour the debt, sadly leaving farming behind. The cutting from the Hexham Courant announces the SALE BY AUCTION to be held on 7th May 1932:

You can only guess at the hardship that was about to ensue when reading that article. Not only were all the animals and farm machinery being offered for sale, but a huge amount of household furnishings in addition, including feather beds, mattresses, cutlery and tableware.

SALES BY AUCTION.

On SATURDAY, 7th MAY.
AT BLOSSOM HILL (HEXHAM).
 For Mr J. Jackson.
 51 SHEEP.
 68 BLACKFACE EWES, 5 and 6 years,
 with Mule Lambs.
 12 MULE GIMMERS & LAMBS, 1 B.L.
 TUP, 3 shear.
 37 CATTLE.
 2 COWS (due July), 2 COWS, in-milk. *
 8 COWS (geld), 1 Heifer Calf, 5 months.
 17 S.H. & POLLED HEIFERS, 2 to 2½
 years, H.W.
 7 HEIFERS, 2½ years old, O.L., 1 Bitch,
 useful Cattle and Sheep.
 BROWN DRAUGHT MARE, 16 h.h., aged,
 quiet and reliable all yokes.
 45 PULLETS (R.I. and W.L.).
 IMPLEMENTS.—2 COUP CARTS and
 Shelvings, MILK FLOAT, Hay Bogie,
 Double-Horse MOWING MACHINE
 (Symm), Blackstone Hay Rake, Blackstone
 SWATH TURNER, Cake Crusher, Cart
 Jack, Hay Heck, Chain Harrow, Byre and
 Stable Tools, 2 New HEN HOUSES, Coops
 and Brooder. HARNESS: Set for Spring
 Cart, 2 Cart Saddles and Trappings, 2 Riding
 Saddles, Tracin-Set and Sundry Har-
 ness. Dairy Utensils SEPARATOR (Di-
 abolo), Table Churn, 15 Railway Milk Cans,
 10 to 17 gals., Milk Cooler and Staud, Milk
 Cans, Wash Tub and Batches.
 HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS.—Wal-
 nut SIDEBOARD, Ash Dressing Table and
 Wash-Stand, 8-piece Drawing Room Suite
 in plush, Roll Top Desk (Oak), CARPETS,
 Painted Wash Stands and D-Tables, 3 Over
 Mantles, Set Trav Lamps, Sundry Chairs,
 Kitchen and other Tables, Crockery and
 Toilet Ware, FEATHER BEDS, Mattres-
 ses, etc.
 SALE 12.30. TERMS—CASH.
 N.B.—The Blackface Sheep are especially
 good, and have a very fine crop of Mule
 Lambs. They have been wintered high and
 will afford every satisfaction to purchasers.
 The Outlying and hav-wintered Heifers are
 of a useful class and in good selling condi-
 tion.

W. & T. T. IVESON,
 Auctioneers, Hexham.

Blossom Hill Farm sale

Bagraw School



Chapter 4

Hard Times At Elrington

Immediately after the sale at Blossom Hill, Martin and his family moved to a tiny farm cottage at Elrington.

His father was out of work, but his eldest daughter Nora was offered a position as housemaid to the Clarkson family at Elrington Hall. On a recent visit to Elrington, John Clarkson, now retired, reminded Martin about some of

Nora's duties at the big house whilst he was a small child. One such duty was to lead John safely by the hand to Bagraw School each day, a good two mile walk. The wage was only 10/- per week, but the family were able to live rent free at the cottage. Joseph could occasionally supplement the weekly income by obtaining casual work on the farm during threshing days or turnip picking. Sometimes he was needed to repair damaged dry stone walling. Martin decided to plant potatoes and other vegetables in the small garden near the cottage, which produced welcome food for the table. Luckily



Leaning on the gate at Blossom Hill



Eva was also able to secure her first job as an extra pair of hands at the nearby Snape farm house. In spite of all these efforts, Martin remembers this as a particularly difficult time, due to the family being "very hard up".

Cottage at Elrington

Chapter 5

Welcome Work at Hunter's Sawmill

Eventually Joseph managed to secure a semi permanent position as a sawyer with Hunter & Son, who were based at Coanwood.

The Hunter brothers also ran a Threshing business from Tyne Mills in Hexham and farmed at The Bush near Haydon Bridge. As with many country jobs at this time a house was included. Once again the family upped sticks and moved to the Bush Cottages just outside Haydon Bridge. Nora began working for George Hunter at the Bush Farm in the big house and Martin distinctly remembers cutting down all the thistles during his very last summer holiday from school. The coal fired oven in the new cottage worked best with larch oven sticks. Martin would accompany his father on the horse and cart to the Darden Burns wood on the Snape Farm road where they would chop firewood and larch sticks to dry out and use at the cottage during the winter months. Martin's school days ended whilst living here, probably at the Christmas holidays when he'd turned 14 years old.

Martins father Joseph Jackson (far left) 1892 working for Wears Timber



Chapter 6

School Days over

Shortly after leaving school the family moved again and took a house in Kingsgate Terrace, Hexham.

One day Martin and his mother were sorting out in the back yard when a local farmer, Joe Dodd, called to see if Martin could help him at The Castle Farm. Joe needed a reliable farm lad and had it on good authority that Martin was a hard worker who was able to milk cows – a skill he'd learnt on a stray goat whilst at Blossom Hill. This was 1935 when milking by machine in rural Northumberland was rare.

Martin obviously made a good impression as the very next Sunday afternoon, he, travelled by bus, with his father, to the Castle Farm at Langley. After settling into the room he would share with Joe Dodd's nephew Arthur, his father returned home leaving Martin sitting on the wooden bench in the farmhouse kitchen - contemplating his new life.



Castle Farm Langley, Martin's room top right

A knock on the bedroom door was the signal for the start to his first working day with milking at 6am sharp. He was expected to milk four cows and muck out the byres before breakfast. The Maid, who was charged with lighting all the fires and also milking a couple of cows, would cook porridge and scrambled eggs for all the workers and family once the morning chores were done.

For a young lad of 14 years of age the days were long and hard, but Martin enjoyed the work and learned a great deal. The Dodd family looked after him very well. The Castle Farm was known as a "good meat house", a common term used by farm workers to indicate good living conditions.

Milking was slightly earlier on Saturday afternoons, which gave Martin the opportunity to travel home with his week's washing and catch up with family news. His Mother was very grateful for the 8/- wage packet and in return gave Martin a bar of chocolate and some clean clothes. Later in the evening Martin would return to Langley in time for milking on the Sunday morning. This pattern continued for the next two and a half years.

Chapter 7

A life in Timber beckons

Martin's father was still working for Hunters Sawmill at the age of 67 years. He had embarked on felling 40 acres of timber in The Target Wood near Coastley Farm.

Due to the size and location of the job, it was proving difficult work. Joseph decided to approach Joe Dodd, in the hope he would release Martin from his farm duties, thus providing an additional pair of hands to help with sawing the timber.

Martin was responsible for firing up the steam traction engine, which provided power to run the two saw benches. Collecting good dry sticks and keeping the fire stoked all day was a full time job. All the cut timber was then transported by Bowman's wagons to the Mickley Coal Company, who used it for sleepers in the pits. After a year, Martin was promoted to operating the saw bench and sharpening saws. His younger brother Tommy was brought in to take over as Stoker.

To his horror, Martin witnessed an unstable stack of pit sleepers sway and topple onto his father, who had been totally unaware of the danger. Joseph was knocked to the ground with a badly injured back and as a result never worked again. It was at this point in his life that Martin literally stepped into his father's shoes and became the main breadwinner for the family.



Tommy Tamar Joseph & Martin

Due to the imminent outbreak of WW II, sawn timber was in great demand. Martin completed clearing the Target Wood, but then swiftly moved to an even bigger job at Shilford, Riding Mill to embark on a 78 acre site. The days were long and hard as the contract agreed with Hunters was on a piecework basis. Other projects quickly followed, with a spell at Tyne Mills before heading up to The Beacon Rigg at Langley, where Martin was assisted by brothers Jimmy and John White.

Although Martin was passed as "A 1 fit" during the war, his work was classed as a reserved occupation. He was also employing four men to cut colliery timber on the job at Riding Mill. However, he quickly decided to join the Local Defence Volunteers and was kept busy attending the drill hall in Hexham on two evenings each week. In addition, a large part of Sunday was devoted to gun handling. During firing practise one weekend, the Major in charge did not follow his own advice and made the fatal mistake of looking up to check why a mortar bomb had not fired. Tragically, due to a delayed explosion, he was hit in the head with shrapnel. The men carried him on a field gate, to seek medical help, however after two weeks in hospital, the Major died.

Chapter 8

Nurse Allison enters my life

Martin bought his first motor bike in 1937, an Ariel 250cc, made by a British manufacturer based in Bournbrook, Birmingham.

He found it an essential way to get around as car ownership was only for the privileged few. He became friendly with a young man who drove wagons for Bowman's called Aiden Taylor. They both shared an interest in motor bikes.

One morning Aiden was riding to work accompanied by his little dog. The poor animal was perching on the petrol tank when Aiden lost control and ended up in a sorry heap! Martin thinks the dog came off best, as Aiden sustained a badly broken leg and was in hospital for a few months.



*Nurse Winnie Allison Red
Cross nurse at Alnwick*



Winnie now nursing at Hexham General Hospital

Martin would visit his friend as often as possible, but it was normally after work later in the evening, when the night staff were on duty. A young, attractive nurse immediately caught his eye, and visiting Aiden became a much more frequent event. Martin quickly discovered Nurse Winne Allison, who didn't smoke or drink and he wondered what he could do to impress her. He was encouraged one evening after a friendly chat around the patient's bed, and offered her a sweet, which she accepted with a big smile. This was the summer of 1948 with war-time rationing, however Martin made absolutely sure he always had a bag of sweets on future visits to Hexham General Hospital.

Finally, as Aiden's health improved and his discharge from hospital was imminent, Martin plucked up the courage to ask Winnie for a date. Much to his relief, she graciously accepted and that weekend they headed by bus to the Palace Picture House in Newcastle's Haymarket.

The evening was a great success and Martin quickly realised he and Winnie shared similar interests and ideals. They both worked very hard and contributed to their respective family homes. Winnie was an only child, born and brought up in Alnwick. Her mother's family were shopkeepers, specialising in both china and bric-a-brac, as well as being long established butchers. Her father was a miner and had also served as a soldier during the First World War. Working in the family business was expected and



Martin and Nora

Winnie learnt how to identify fine bone china. However, she always yearned for a life in nursing and decided to join the Red Cross. At the outbreak of war she was offered a post in the south of England, much to her mother's dismay. Luckily for Martin, Anne Allison had "put her foot down" and refused to let her daughter travel any further than Hexham.

The relationship blossomed and Martin and Winnie regularly met in the summer evenings to take long walks along Tyne Green to the golf course, or up to Fellside, no doubt checking on some of the woods Martin was cutting.

A trip to Alnwick to meet Winnie's mother went well, and soon afterwards the couple announced their engagement, having carefully selected a ring in Samuels the Jewellers in Newcastle. Approximately twelve months later on 2nd June 1951 they were married at The Presbyterian Church in Clayport Street, Alnwick. It was a warm sunny day and Martin remembers a lot of Winnie's nursing friends being transported from Hexham in a small bus. The 1951 Festival of Britain was being held in London, so shortly after the wedding the happy couple headed south for a 2 week honeymoon.



Martin and Winnie's wedding day in Alnwick

Chapter 9

Peace Time arrives



Woodley Field, Martin's first timber job in his own right

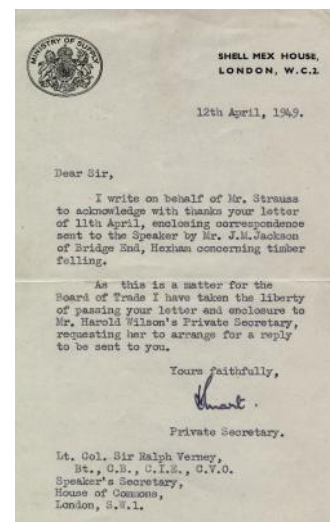
The end of the war was a great relief, however for Martin it coincided with Hunters paying him off.

Luckily, Bernard Lobley, the wool merchant who stored wool at the Bridge End in Hexham (next to the Rookery where the Jackson family had moved after Kingsgate), needed timber felling at Woodley Field. There was a desperate shortage of hardwood, but fortunately there was an abundant supply in the two

valleys leading up to Summerods and Quarry House. On this occasion, and without Hunters backing, Martin needed to supply all his own tools and equipment. A trip to a machinery sale in Newcastle produced a saw bench for the princely sum of £160 (£4,152.00 in today's money) powered by an old diesel bus engine acquired from Jack Charlton of Newbrough. It took between two and three years to clear this area with a team of six men.

In April 1949 Martin experienced difficulty in obtaining the requisite timber license to fell some standing beech on the Dukes House Estate. Many restrictions were in place after the war and it was common practise to grant licences to old established firms. Understandably Martin was extremely worried for his livelihood. He sought the help of H.C. Sparke, a local insurance man. Herbert formulated a letter to the Speaker of The House of Commons Colonel D. Clifton Brown. Thankfully the letter was quickly passed to the Board of Trade for the personal attention of Mr. Harold Wilson's private secretary. The response was not helpful, however very shortly afterwards, regulations were changed, making it the landowners responsibility to obtain the felling licence.

The memory dims slightly, but other projects followed which included; the High Wood at Leazes for the Strakers, a large area of birch between Parkwell and Fellside and finally a very difficult job at Staward Peel for the Lanchester Timber Co. It was this final contract that gave Martin the experience and confidence to tender for future work in his own right. Soon afterwards, he successfully acquired work on the Whitfield Estate, owned by the Blackett-Ord family.



Important correspondence from London

Chapter 10

Jackson's Sawmill established at the Bridge End

In 1952, as work was expanding and Martin acquired more round timber, it was necessary to find a location to stock pile the wood.

Fred Bowman owned a large field at the Bridge End Hexham and was anxious to sell this to Martin as British Road Services, a government run haulage executive, were pushing to acquire the site. Having had all his wagons commandeered by the Government during the war, Fred felt bitter and resisted doing a deal with them. An agreement was reached between Martin and Fred, where 50% deposit was paid up front and the remainder settled six months later.

The first step was to arrange for Hunters to install a hard core stone road to facilitate vehicular access for leading in all the wood. Next, a circular saw rack bench was installed, the obligatory bait cabin, followed by a small caravan which acted as an office. Ernie Williams manned the office, lighting the stove each morning and issuing delivery tickets. In those days, with the absence of lifting gear, large logs were split with gun powder. An auger was used to bore a hole down the centre of the log, where gun powder was placed with a fuse attached, before packing the hole with coal dust. After lighting the fuse, the subsequent explosion successfully split the log in two. Buying and storing gun powder necessitated having a license, granted by the police; however issues of health and safety were nothing like as rigid as they are now. One evening Martin left a couple of the small plastic bags containing gun powder on top of the wood burning stove, as it had not been lit that day. The next morning was rather chilly and when Ernie arrived, he hastily got the stove going, without even noticing the dangerous substance lying on top. Thankfully no damage was done as the fuses weren't attached, but poor Ernie was a nervous wreck for most of the day!

Earliest sawmill picture 1952



Chapter 11

Family Life and leisure time

The newlyweds “lived in” at the Rookery, Bridge End for a short time before moving to their first home in St. Andrews Road. Winnie’s Mother and Aunt arrived from Alnwick for the day, to help with the move.

In common with most couples at the time, Winnie gave up her job to support her husband and become a full time housewife. A few years later in 1954, Winnie gave birth to Michael. Sister Sheila was born four years later, by which time the family had moved to 7, St. Oswald’s Road. This very same house recently featured in the series “Who Do You Think You Are”, when Kevin Whately, the north-eastern actor was tracing his family tree.

Martin continued to work long hours whilst building up the sawmill business. Winnie devoted her time to bringing up the children, as well as looking after her aged Mother. Granny Allison, had decided to leave Alnwick and come to live with the Jackson’s in the larger family home.

The new house in St. Oswald’s road had lots of potential and Martin made various improvements. He built a garage and transformed the garden. The lawn was carefully sown and a greenhouse erected. Martin was able to concentrate on growing lots of vegetables and flowers, something he has always enjoyed. Even today, he has a small plot of vegetables, behind the office at the sawmill.

Other hobbies included bee keeping, cine photography and accordion music as well as travelling. Whatever leisure time Martin had he always liked to share it with his wife and children. Michael and Sheila particularly remember the various seaside holidays they enjoyed together most summers.



Michael and Sheila

Chapter 12

Expansion of the sawmill

The caravan, which served as the sawmill's first office, was quickly replaced with an old converted deep litter house - more commonly known as a hen house!

Martin smiles when he recalls its original location was Jackson Street, Ponteland. Michael remembers his father's office looking rather grand, as it was all oak panelled. A veneer manufacturer from London, provided the panelling which was made from some oak butts that Martin had sold to them. In the main office book work was done on a sloping bench whilst sitting on high stools. The sliding glass window was re-installed in the existing office and is still used today when dealing with customers.



Sawmill taking shape

Firewood deliveries

The many changes which occurred after the 1950's are too numerous to cover in detail. The original tractor driven circular saws were replaced by electric powered band saws. Eventually things progressed to more electronic and computer controlled machinery.

Over the years more concrete was laid to avoid the inevitable problems with "clarts". Bigger buildings replaced the old dilapidated sheds, at the same time accommodating all the extra machinery. More sophisticated wagons and tractors became the norm and delivering firewood by horse and cart was a far and distant memory.



MR. LES NICHOL, the 51-year-old wood merchant, of Hexham, on his rounds with his horse Roger.

The original creosote tank from the 1950's was replaced ten years later with a modern pressure creosote plant. Finally, due to environmental pressures a decision was taken to treat timber with the more universally acceptable Celcure.

In the mid 1970's the original lattice work crane was replaced by a similar type, which became a local landmark, mostly due to its huge 120 ft jib.

Crane provides a backdrop to new sawmill building



At its peak the sawmill employed approximately forty men, including tree fellers. Martin often reminisces about work undertaken on many of the well known country estates: Featherstone Castle (John Clark), Whitfield (Blackett-Ord), Healey (Warde-Aldam), Cheeseburn Grange (Riddell), Blenkinsopp (Joicey), Kirkharle (John Anderson), Hesleyside (Charlton), Nunwick (Allgood), Netherwitton (Trevelyan), Swinburn (Sir John Riddell), Capheaton (Browne-Swinburn), The Chesters (Benson) and Lord Allendale's Dilston are some of the more memorable ones he mentions.



Old Timers returning from a jaunt

Chapter 13

Time to Slow Down



Golden Wedding celebrations

Retirement isn't something that Martin has settled into, as he continues to drive to the sawmill everyday apart from Sundays.

It was the early 1990's and Martin & Winnie loved to spend time with their four grandchildren and families. It was good to see Martin slow down and enjoy travelling with Winnie and their wide circle of friends; they visited many interesting parts of the world.

In June 2001 Martin and Winnie celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at the Beaumont Hotel in Hexham. They were delighted to be surrounded by family, friends and work colleagues. Martin reluctantly agreed, after pressure from Winnie, to allow the Hexham Courant to take a picture and write a small piece in the paper. The happy couple posed in the back garden on a very warm June day, no doubt remembering the happy events of fifty years earlier.

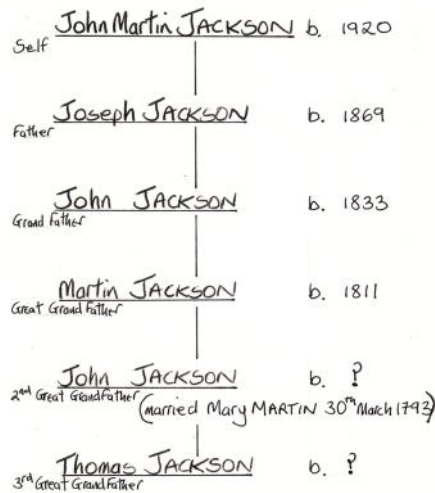


*Mark, Jennifer, David,
Martin, Richard and
Winnie December
2004*

Chapter 14

Canadian relatives pay a visit

Relationship: John Martin JACKSON to Thomas JACKSON



Thomas JACKSON is the 3rd Great Grandfather of John Martin JACKSON

Tracing Martin's roots

cousins twice removed to Martin. Their grandfather, John Walton Jackson, was born at Oldfield and served with the Newcastle & Gateshead Police Force. Although he never wanted to leave this country, all of his five children emigrated to Canada during the 1920's

Martin has always been very interested in family history and his roots. Recently, he has been able to devote more time to researching the Jackson's heritage.

An early discovery was the realisation that his middle name, Martin, was in fact a surname from the female side of the family. His great, great grandfather John Jackson married Mary Martin at St Cuthbert's Church in Allendale on 30th March 1793. Below is a simple family tree which demonstrates the connection.

With the help of Stanley Jackson from Catton, we were delighted to be contacted by relatives in Toronto Canada. After many emails across the Atlantic, we discovered Doreen and Pat are first



Jackson gathering with Canadians

After our initial contact with Doreen and Pat, we were thrilled to learn they were planning to visit Northumberland. The 2 weeks they spent here in September led to many trips of discovery and happy times in conversation with the wider family. The highlight for Martin was being invited to a party in Catton where the Canadians were honoured guests. Not only did he get the chance to meet new relatives, but everyone had photographs and interesting documents to share. A large group photograph was taken to mark the event and record it for future generations.

Chapter 15

Wedding Bells chime

As Martin approaches his 90th birthday, he takes comfort in the fact that his grandchildren are making their way in the world.

To date none have expressed a desire to become farmers or timber merchants but Martin acknowledges that times have changed. His advice to them has always been, "work hard and make the most of every opportunity in life".

During this summer Martin was delighted when his only grand daughter Jennifer married Edward Hall at Mitford Parish Church, near Morpeth. Amazingly, Edward's grandfather, Roger Rutherford, had attended Shaftoe Trust School at the same time as Martin. Sadly Mark, the youngest grandchild, who is currently working in New Zealand, wasn't able to return for the wedding, but his brother Richard and Jennifer's brother David were in attendance. We were blessed with wonderful weather on this very happy occasion.



Jennifer and Edward's Wedding Day

Chapter 16

Messages & Tributes

I have pondered long and hard about how to conclude the story of Martin's life.

After receiving the following letters from people who have been closely associated with Martin, I decided their words would be a perfect end to the story so far.

Ode To Martin

*He sits majestic in his chair
And almost rules his world from there
Memories of times long gone
And stories of the jobs he's done
From farmers boy to timber man
All part of life's plan
You don't need a clock when Martin's your neighbour
He's up at six and retires at ten
It must be the years of hard work and labour
For the next day he starts all over again
But give me a man who is nicely plump
Short in the leg and broad in the rump
A gentleman with strong filled hands
Who'll never make absurd demands
But shares with me his excess seeds
And pays attention to my needs
Is always there when there's a crisis
Avoiding mention of my vices
But with a twinkle in his eye
Will tell us all that we'll get by
May his long life be filled with cheer
It's our good luck to know he's near*

by Bob Lorimer

Mississauga, Ontario

28th October 2010

Dear Martin,

Our electricity here in Canada is a different cycle so I was unable to watch 'The Last Horsemen' until this week, when I set up my new computer and was able to play the DVD on it. Anyway, the video is fabulous and I am proud to say I am related to an English movie star - Martin Jackson! You showed up at a farm equipment sale, a Methodist church, and of course at your saw mill where I actually was able to see some work being done. Very interesting! There was also another time when John Dodd mentioned your name as the owner of the saw mill where he has parts repaired. Great work!

My Mother was born in Gateshead but spent much time with her Grandparents Martin Samuel and Jane Jackson at Oldfield in Catton. Although my roots were in Northumberland I never felt it so much until I came to visit in September. I really fell in love with the country and the people and when I watched 'The Last Horsemen' it all came back to me and I am sure I will watch it over and over. I think I found the farming interesting as well because my Grandfather was a farmer in Canada and I spent time there as a child like my Mother did. Would you believe I can remember the huge horses on that farm but I also remember driving the tractor.

My husband Don is going to watch the DVD next and I will pass it along to others. Thank you so much for sharing "Sillywrae" with me.

Love Doreen

George McCowie FCA
Reflections of the Accountant
1958 – 2010

It is hard to believe that I have acted as the Accountant and tax adviser to Martin Jackson since I left school in 1958 aged 16yrs and started training as a chartered accountant. "Wet behind the ears" in 1958 I was asked to prepare the accounts for Martin and this was a "big job", not just for me but for the firm I was training with. The previous accountant had let the accounts and taxation affairs get badly behind and I had three years to catch up. I was overawed to meet such an important Hexham business man and somewhat frightened. I had no need to worry; he was a "gentle giant" and was kind and helpful to this lad from the council estate. He has never changed and has in fact passed on very successfully, his kindness, caring and business acumen to his son Michael.

In those early years, the business was founded on the supply of pit props to the National Coal Board and this required a regular supply of timber from the north of England. Martin spent a large amount of his time buying up woodland as a regular supply of timber, at one time; I honestly believed he owned all of the woodland in the north of England. When I prepared the annual accounts, he had to give me the stock. Out would come the "little book" and he would list a large number of plots of timber which he owned. It was really amazing! I still wonder to this day whether there are plots of timber in Northumberland unaccounted for which nobody knows who owns.

But the world has moved on, the “new” sawmill which was a major investment thirty plus years ago is now a relic. The NCB and mines have all gone and huge amounts of cheap timber are imported from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Pit props have been replaced by fencing and now wooden buildings. New competitors have moved in with huge capital investment and manufacture flooring and building materials. But Martin is still the same person, if a bit older than 1958 (aged 37yrs then) and is still looked up to by competitors and other business men in the area.

Martin had a great partner, in business and life, with his wife Winnie on whom he depended. He may have thought he was the boss but every married man knows otherwise.

During my time with him he had a number of serious strokes which hospitalised him for some time but he always came back again and still is involved in the business.

When I visited him at these difficult times, he always said he would be back, and he was. He believes even now, as I do at 68yrs, that retirement is not good for you. Work is important for your health.

Many people have a stone memorial or plaque erected to say what they have achieved in their lifetime but Martin has something better. Thousands of pit props buried underground which one day will almost certainly resurface, and perhaps someone will say that is a Martin Jackson pit prop.

I could always rely on Martin for his support in business and on personal matters and I still can. He is a business colleague and a personal friend.

George Mc Cowie FCA

I began working for the Blackett-Ord family on the Whitfield state in 1964 and got to know Martin Jackson very well a few years later. Martin had agreed terms with my employer, Jock Blackett-Ord (as he was known to close friends) to fell the Monk Wood on the West Allen river. It was a huge operation, not least because of the size of the trees, but also as a bridge had to be built to cross the river. A number of the tallest Spruce trees were selected and felled to act as supports. Thick poplar planks were then secured on top. After four days of hard labour the bridge spanned the river, allowing Martin's brand new County tractor to gain access and begin winching all the logs down to the field next to the river. The ex army Matador then loaded the trees onto the pole wagon which slowly made its way over the bridge and up the Staward bends. Not the easiest of routes, but numerous loads of timber were transported in this way. I don't think the army could have done a better job!

Martin was seldom beat when it came to difficult jobs. On another occasion, a large beech tree was overhanging the road in Ninebanks village. His men attached strong chains to the trunk. It took three tractors with winches to successfully pull this dangerous tree out of harm's way whilst being felled.

Jock Blackett-Ord spoke highly of Martin and liked the calm way he conducted business. During the whole time I worked on the Whitfield estate over 90% of the timber sold was cut and extracted by J.M.Jackson.

For myself I have always found Martin to be kind and helpful. I appreciated all the times he invited me to join him at Forestry exhibitions as well as some of the grand parties he organised.

I wish him well on his 90th Birthday celebrations.

Joe Benn

Head Woodman (retired)

Whitfield



*Bridge Building on
the West Allen river*

Living as I did on the Whitfield estate the big timber waggons of J. M. Jackson were a familiar sight. I didn't know him, but when I first re-researched my family tree I discovered John Jackson married Mary Martin my great great grandfather William's sister. Their son was the first of many Martin Jacksons.

Two years ago Linda brought Martin to Farney Shield, home of his great grandfather Martin Jackson. It was a lovely day so we decided to go to Wellhope and travelled up the Wellheads, past the flock of Swaledale sheep, onto Allendale Common. To the right was Pinch Park and Hesley Well, old homes of the Martins. Ahead lay the great Wellhope mines, once a thriving community. The only surviving house nestled in its sheltered valley, completely isolated, and absolutely unique. Martin recalled walking from Keenley Thorn as a young boy to help Smith Jackson and his son Martin with the hay.

He had many memories from almost eighty years past which he shared with us. A special day shared with a special man whom we are proud to call our friend.

Marina Wallace

Farney Shield

Arriving at Wellhope



My wish is that anyone reading this story will gain some insight into the way country folk lived and worked in times past. The journey began a number of years ago when I started to capture in writing the many interesting tales Martin recalled as we drove around the byways of Northumberland. Being a modest man of few words, a little gentle persuasion was often needed to draw out the finer details. Thankfully Martin has an extremely good memory, making it easier for me to link the stories together with dates, places and photographs. It's been such an interesting experience, which I feel has enriched both our lives. Martin is a truly remarkable man. This book is my gift to him on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

Linda Jackson

December 2010