

WEST FARM, LITTON:



a hill farming case study

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Geography Enquiry

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Total number of words, excluding diagrams, quotations and captions: 941 words

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND DECLARATION

In the compilation of this enquiry, I have made reference to a variety of sources, listed below, and have used 'Microsoft Word,' 'Claris Works' and 'MS Paint.' I produced it on a 'Windows 98' computer supplied by Gateway; printed the project with a 'Hewlett Packard Deskjet 950C' printer; and scanned images using a 'Hewlett Packard Scanjet 4200C' scanner.

The sources that I used were:

In addition to these, I talked to local residents, including the two farmers and a gamekeeper.

The Dales of Yorkshire: a Portrait	Richard Muir	P.R. Books	R
The Yorkshire Dales: a View from the Millennium	YDMT	Great Northern Books	B
The New Wider World	David Waugh	Nelson	B
Longman Geography for GCSE	Vincent Bunce	Longman	B
GCSE Geography		Coordination Group	B
Yorkshire Dales Online (www.yorkshiredales.net)		E-Resource	B
Microsoft Auto Route Express		Microsoft	R
'Discovering Craven' (CD-Rom)	Trevour Coucher	Interactive Resource	R

B – Background Reading
E – E-Resource
I – Interactive Resource (CD-Rom)
R – Reference
YDMT – the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

I, Antony Smith, confirm that this enquiry is entirely my own worked and that I personally word processed it, although I may not have taken all of the photographs myself. Signed: (6/12/00)

*"With its potent mix of rolling fells, deep valleys, swirling rivers and limestone scars,
all bound together by a rich tapestry of drystone walls,
the Dales are rightly regarded as one of the most treasured landscapes in Britain..."*

HRH the Prince of Wales, in an introduction to:
'The Yorkshire Dales: a View from the Millennium'

Erratum: for *tuping*, please read *tupping* throughout

AIMS AND EXPECTATIONS

AIMS

In this enquiry, I have several aims. The first, and most important, aim is to create a farming case study about West Farm. Within this survey, I have two further, smaller aims in the form of questions, which I intend to investigate:

- Is West Farm an arable or pastoral farm, and why is it so? Here, I shall distinguish between the physical and human factors affecting farming, and how they influence West Farm in their different ways.
- If West Farm is an arable farm, which types of crops do the farmers grow and why? If West Farm is pastoral, I shall consider the corresponding question, which animals are kept and why?

EXPECTATIONS

Using my limited knowledge about agriculture and the area, I expect West Farm to be totally pastoral, owing to the unsuitability of the terrain for arable farming. Due to the cold, harsh climate, the livestock is limited to sheep and cattle at present, with the sheep grazing on the high fells and the cattle on the allotments.



An evening sky in Littondale, the location of my study

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

I collected the majority of the information that I used in the compilation of this project by interviewing one of the two brothers who own and manage the farm. Through talking to him, I managed to establish a working knowledge of both the area and the farm itself. I had already visited and walked around West Farm, so I already knew some facts, which were to prove useful while writing this project. Photographing the area was another way in which the data I used was collected. I also talked briefly to the other farmer and learned many useful facts about the dale and the farm from a local gamekeeper who has lived in Littondale since his birth "in the hills" and experienced many of the changes undertaken in this last century.

The relatively informal way in which I obtained my information means that I cannot display results as such, but listed below is a series of some of the questions that I investigated while collecting data.

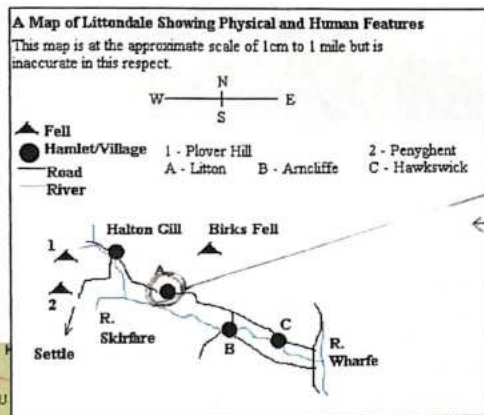
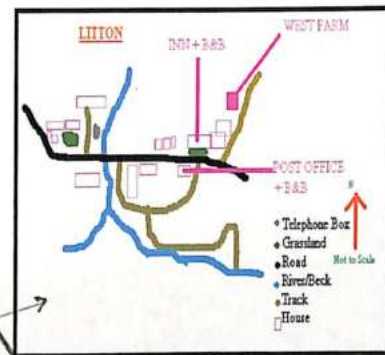
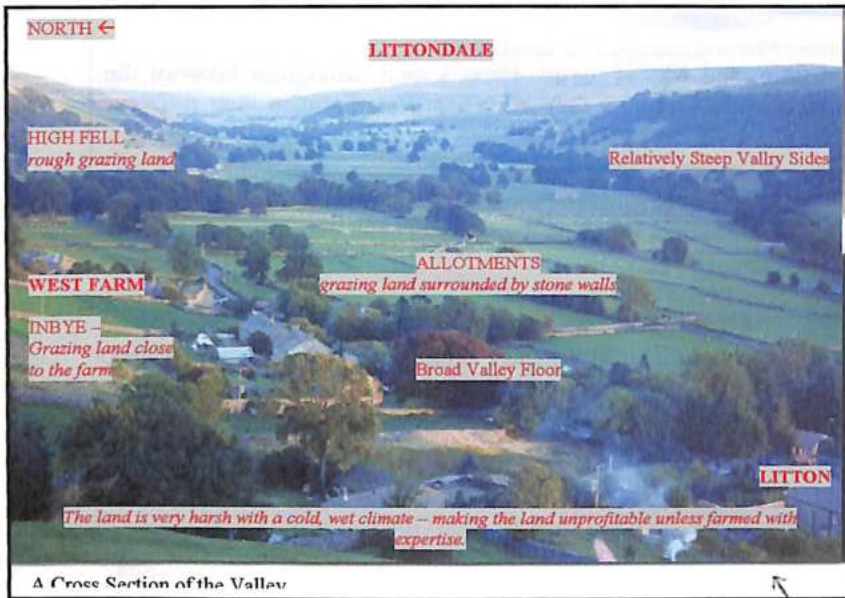
A List of Sample Questions that I asked

- Where exactly is West Farm?
- How large is the farm?
- How many, and what type of, livestock are kept and/or crops are produced?
- What is the workforce total on the farm?
- What machinery is kept at the farm, and which purpose are they put to?
- Has the farm diversified? If so, in what way, but, if not, why?
- Which processes are carried out on West Farm in a regular basis?
- In the opinion of local people, what is the future of farming in the Dales?

AN INTRODUCTION TO LITTONDALE

Littondale is a U-shaped valley through which the River Skirfare, a distributary of the Humber, meanders its way. The area is evidence of the effects of glaciation and the dale was shaped in particular by the Devensian Glaciation. The origin of sheep farming in the area goes back to the time when the monks of Fountain's Abbey were granted the land for this purpose and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries the land continued to be farmed on a smaller scale.

The maps on this page illustrate the local geographical context of West Farm.



the farmer –

“the chief custodian of this fragile landscape”

Paul Hannon

FACT FILE: WEST FARM, LITTON

Owners: Stephen and Stewart Lund

Location: On the outskirts of the small hamlet of Litton in Littondale

Type of Farm: West Farm is a relatively small pastoral hill farm. It is also sedentary, extensive and commercial.

Size of Farm: 1,200 hectares in total
The actual size of the farm is five hundred hectares, but this was increased by a further seven hundred to one thousand and two hundred hectares when the farm's size was increased.

Livestock Type: Cattle: Fresian
Sheep: Swaledale

Livestock Numbers:	Cattle:	Cows and Calves (of any sex):	50
		Bulls:	00
		Total:	50
	Sheep:	Ewes (of any age):	1,000
		Rams (of any age):	1,200
		Total:	2,200

Farm Operations: The farm mainly operates as a breeding farm. Apart from the animals that retain for their flock, they sell on all their new livestock each year to other farmers, either for slaughter for meat or to form part of the other farm's flock. Fleeces are sold to the British Wool Marketing Board at a variable price, usually around fifty pence. Unfortunately, the price has in recent years been in decline. The milk, which the cows produce, is fed to their calves or lambs that have been adopted more as pets than as livestock because their mother had died or neglected them and a suitable foster parent could not be found in time.

Level of Diversification: The basic idea of 'diversification' – that is to reduce the risk factor of constantly varying stock prices by producing a supplementary form of income – has been seriously considered by the farmers. However, almost all ventures are tourist-based and there are already local facilities to accommodate their needs. Some form of diversification would be carried out were a viable idea for a venture found.

Workforce: No hired labourers are required to work on the farm, so the workforce total is just two.

Sheep Dogs: There are four sheep dogs and a pup sheep dog at West Farm.

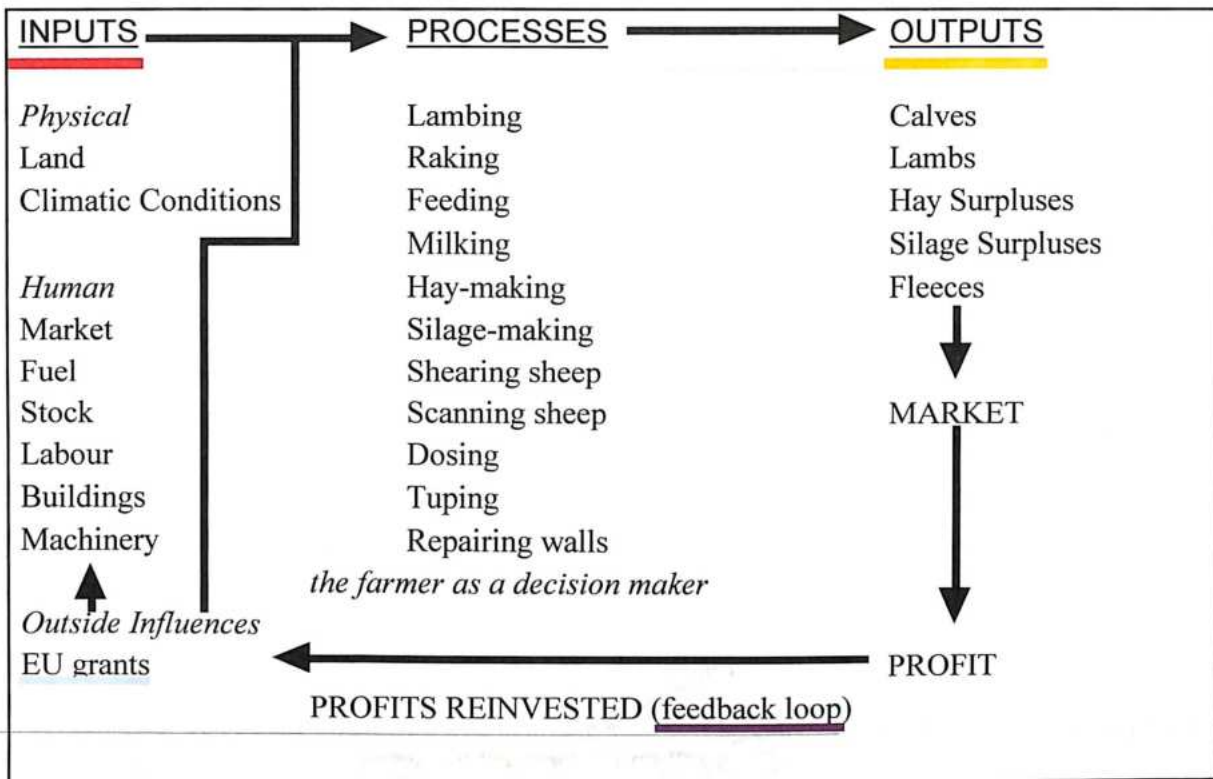
Machinery:	1x Ford 4000 tractor	<i>Purpose:</i>	transporting stock and small jobs
	1x Ford 6610 tractor		as a front end loader, carrying silo
	1x John Dier 2040		inter-change,
	1x PZ mower		spreading newly mown grass
	1x International Standard Bailer		making conventional bales
	1x Crone Round Bailer		making conventional bales
	2x Farh Centipede		spreading newly mown grass
	1x British Leyland Rowing Boat		making hay into rows
	2x Hay trailers		carrying hay

All of the machinery at West Farm is vital as hill farmers cannot afford extra machinery. Much machinery is used only at hay making time and stands idle the rest of the year (which is expensive, but there are no local contractors). Farmers have to be independent.

* apart from one bull 'in residence' at the farm between October and December inclusive, while the 'tuping' of the cows occur

THE FARMING SYSTEM

West Farm can be viewed as a system, with inputs, processes and outputs.



▶ The inputs of West Farm's system are both physical (natural) or human (affected by man or his influence) and these together are processed to make the outputs.

▶ There are just five outputs to this system, two of which cannot be guaranteed each year (the surpluses of hay and silage). The price of sheep and cattle is, although generally increasing very slightly, variable and constantly fluctuating.

▶ Furthermore, the feedback loop shows that, following a poor year, a farmers' problems would not end when the cause of the problem does. Like economy in general, a certain year has a lasting effect on another, the consequences of a disastrous year being visible in future ones, and a poor year in farming could be devastating for poor hill farms.

West Farm and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU)

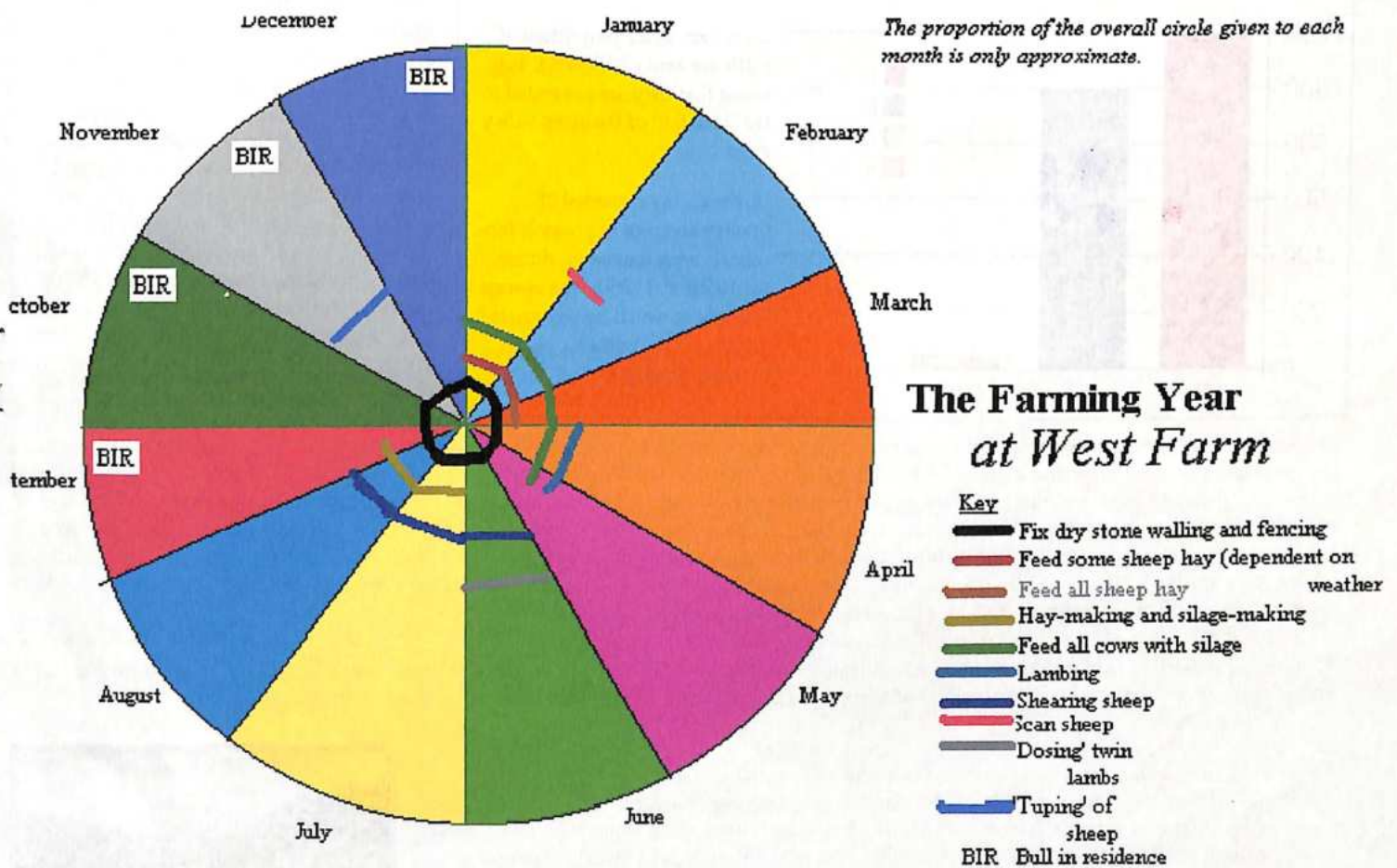
▶ In the United Kingdom, the MAFF's agricultural policy is based on the C.A.P. of 1962 as well as the 1984 and 1992 reforms. Under these, a farmer is entitled to subsidy for the crops he produces, livestock he owns and for environmental sensitivity as well as diversification and some other less significant activities. West Farm, which is within a Less Favoured Area as defined by the LFAs Directive (1975) so it gains higher grants in compensation for greater production costs than in other parts of the country, is given £132 for each breeding cow and £28 per ewe. The Lunds also gain 'environmental' grants, such as for hay-making after 10th July so as to save local wild flowers which by then have germinated. The policies are "slightly" unpopular in Littondale, and not compatible with the traditional Dales way of life. Stephen Lund feels that they are made by people unaware of the modern issues and problems facing agricultural change in local communities.

WHAT GOES ON AT WEST FARM DURING THE YEAR? - FARMING PROCESSES

The diagram below illustrates the most important of the numerous processes that occur at West Farm. Although all are of importance, as without any one 'process' – whether or not illustrated here-, the farm would be unable to operate efficiently, only some have been selected to be included. Other tasks include rotating the fields on which sheep and cattle graze or – probably most importantly – auctioning the flock.

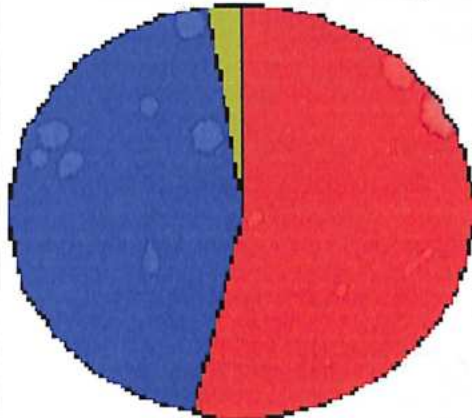
Clearly, the busiest months of the year are between January and August, especially the periods of lambing and hay-making. They fortunately occur in the same, when rain is less likely to occur and the days long. According to the diagram, little needs to be done during the bleaker season but this is the time when the majority of repairs to walls and fencing is carried out, due to the 'bull-fights' that occur when sheep are tugged. Also at this period, livestock are auctioned and, in the last four months of the year, a bull is 'in residence' at the farm and so the time is crucial.

Farming is one of the only truly 365-days-a-year occupations and West Farm can be extremely busy, although no more demanding than other similar farms its size in the area.



DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

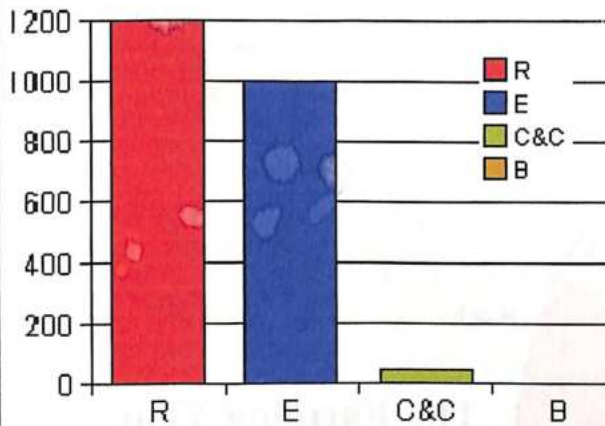
Livestock Graphs for West Farm



Comments: Livestock is, indeed, kept at West Farm and arable is not produced, because of the poor water supply (Litton is not connected to mains water), the porous (infertile) soil type and the rugged, arduous landscape.

My hypothesis that suggested sheep and cattle would be kept was correct, and there are two interesting proportions to note from the pie chart (left):

1.) Although more rams are sold (for slaughter) than ewes (for breeding), there are more rams kept at West Farm than ewes.



2.) A very small proportion of cattle are kept (2 10/45%), suggesting that they are not suited to the 'high fell' of the steep valley sides.

However, my dismissal of poultry and pigs as possible farm animals were unwise as, during the 1950s and 1960s, the average Dales farms would have consisted of dairy cows, bullocks, sheep, pigs and poultry.

The factors making arable farming impractical here (see left) are physical. Human factors would also make (efficient) arable farming here impossible, partly because they are 'built upon' physical factors:

As arable farming does not occur due to physical factors in these areas, there is little market for crops as (for reasons of convenience, efficiency and maintaining low prices) large arable stores are situated in Southern England. Therefore, all industrial chemicals etc. needed are not for sale in bulk in the Dales.

Agriculture forms a small but vital part of the British economy, and it is farmers who, with expertise and common sense, manage the varied ecosystems of the country. Historians have been able to trace the existence of farming in England, from its primitive subsistence roots in the Bronze Age to the commercial (and often high-tech) industry that it is today and it is clear that change is occurring. We are seeing the dawn of a new era: genetically modified crops and cloned livestock in battery units may become the 'farming' of the next millennium. This is extravagant, but there is no doubt that the subtle changes are beginning to quicken their pace.

The future, however, is likely to be one of great change, where the end of the traditional family farm is almost inevitable. As farmers, the caretakers of the landscape which has been formed by man and nature coexisting in a remarkable fashion for years, leave, so our 'green and pleasant land' with its 'mountains green' and 'pleasant pastures' will disappear. The in-migration of urban dwellers and so increasing house prices, competition with intensive large pastoral farms in South England and unfair governmental subsidies have all contributed to the "urban pull" of the rural youth, who – quite understandably – are unwilling to commit themselves to a hard life where risks are larger than in other occupations. The 'plaything of London and EEC policies' – the agricultural subsidy system – is to be changed, with Littondale farmers having decreased grants due to incorrect classification.

Traditional expertise is being lost. The local attitude towards the future is that traditional small-scale farming will soon no longer be viable and Littondale will be intensively farmed by a large corporation. The loss of the family run farm would be devastating:

"Our conclusion is inescapable: the small farmer made the Yorkshire Dales and, when he goes, so too do the priceless vistas of meadow, pasture, wall and barn. In a strange way it is not poverty which threatens the region – the Dalesfolk have coped with poverty for centuries – but wealth. The enchanting beauty wrought over the centuries by people of the Dales may be defaced by rich outsiders in the space of just a few decades."

The Dales of Yorkshire: a Portrait
by R. Muir (P.R. Books)



a view down Littondale

The present occupants of West Farm are Stephen
Lund and his wife Andrea, and their children
— Sophie Claughton (5/1/80), Maya Claughton
(2/7/81) and Harriet Rose Lund (18/2/92).

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West Farm

The farmhouse was built circa 1820 and is now a Grade II listed building. Neither the external or interior structure of the house has been altered and it remains very much in its original state. Being of Georgian design the proportions of the house are quite grand by modern day standards and its position is elegant, sitting slightly raised above the main road into the village of Litton.

Obviously the interior of the house has been brought up to date with modern conveniences, such as the installation of a bathroom, a modern kitchen and central heating, but many of the original features have been retained such as period fireplaces in the bedrooms and plaster cornicing in the hall and drawing room.

The exterior of the house still retains its original small paned windows set in smooth, plain stone surrounds and a notable feature of the house is that it has a very distinctive hipped roof with multiple gable-end chimney stacks.

The occupants

The present occupants of West Farm are Stephen Lund and his wife Andrea and their children - Sophie Claughton (5/1/1980), Maya Claughton (2/7/1981) and Harriet Rose Lund (18/2/1992).

All three girls have spent their childhood and adolescent years in the dale. Sophie and Maya both attended Arncliffe Primary School and then Skipton Girls High School. Sophie is at present a student at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle reading Law and Maya has just completed a foundation year in Fashion Design at Leeds College of Art and Design. Harriet is a pupil at Arncliffe Primary School following in the footsteps of her grandparents, father and older sisters.

The Farm

In 1967 Dennis Lund of East Garth Farm, Litton took over West Farm from the Bramley family who were retiring after 45 years, and he farmed it with his wife Eileen (nee Gill) and their two young sons, Stewart and Stephen.

In the mid 1970's Dennis returned to East Garth to farm and left his younger son Stephen to continue running West Farm. Stewart, at this time was living and working with a neighbouring farmer, George Emmott, who farmed at Armistead Farm, Litton. When George Emmott left the dale to farm in Derbyshire, Stewart returned to West Farm and both brothers have farmed it jointly ever since.

West Farm is a hill farm, primarily sheep with a breeding flock of Swaledales ewes and a smaller flock of mule sheep. The farm did have a small dairy herd of Friesian cattle for many years and supplied milk not only locally but also to the dairy. However, due to the collapse of the Milk Marketing Board it became impossible for

small milk producers to continue and the dairy herd was sold. The farm still carries a few cattle for breeding.

Farming methods have had to change with the times and conservation is now a key issue. West Farm is included in one of the ESA - Environmentally Sensitive Area - schemes, which promote the implementation of more natural and conservation minded farming methods. The farm is also involved in the Country Stewardship Scheme which covers moorland regeneration and renovation and re-instatement of dry stone walls.

Although the size of individual farms has increased drastically over the past 50 years, due to the amalgamation of smaller farms (at the beginning of the 20th century Litton supported 7 farms), it is now becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a viable living for a family in hill farming. It is a fact that the future for hill farmers looks very bleak indeed and that sadly this way of life passed from grandfather to father to son will possibly soon cease to exist, and along with it will disappear the tended and managed landscape of some of our most wild and beautiful upland areas.

Andrea Lund

Like many farmers wives nowadays I have alternative employment independent of the farm and am employed as a Counsellor, specialising in drug/alcohol problems.

Although I take a great interest in the day to day running of the farm, being away from home most days during the week means that I do not have as much time as I would like to spend sharing the farmwork and being involved.

As a member of the wider community I have always played an active part in local events such as fund-raising and the management of Amerdale Hall. This year, along with others, I was able to successfully re-form the Littondale Youth Club.

I have lived in Littondale for the past 20 years and being part of the community has always been important to me. The dale has a special appeal of its own and over the years I have come to appreciate its beauty and uniqueness more and more. Juggling full-time employment, the demands of farm life and caring for a family can be difficult at times, but being fortunate enough to live in this still very beautiful environment has its rewards. It is, and hopefully will remain in years to come, a special place to live.

West Farm by Harriet Lund.



Litt on dale

IF you lived in a city you would have to live by a busy motorway and you would not have a very nice garden and you wouldn't get to sleep because there would be discos and noisy teenagers. The city would not be very nice because it would have graffiti and it is dirty. If you lived in the country it is clean and you see lots of animals the best thing I like about the country is that there are lots of fields to play in and I get a nice big garden and there is lovely music from the birds in the morning and evening. I like itton because it is peaceful so you can sit and watch the sun set.



Harriet age 8