

### 3 Armistead Barns

#### Litton, Sanctuary in the Dale

I was born in Pontefract, but came to the Dales to celebrate my eighteenth birthday and never left. I worked at the George at Hubberholme, then Amerdale House Hotel until I married Jonty Turner in March 1981. Having meandered my way up the dale, living in Hawkswick, then Arncliffe, I came to Litton in January 1991.

My first impression of the village was of friendly warmth, Although I had lived in the dale for twelve years there were several Litton residents that I did not know, a situation that was soon remedied during gatherings at the Post Office, a welcoming natural meeting place in the village.

I spent the first three years living in Litton, in a caravan behind Litton Hall Barn, not an ideal situation with five children but one that we survived with help from old and new friends in the village.

After many delays and setbacks, the Sanctuary Housing Association conversion of Armistead Barns was completed in May 1994. A momentous day, not just for my family, but also for the other families who moved there.

Housing need had been identified in the dale, by a local working party, who approached Sanctuary. The scheme was designed as low cost rented housing to meet local needs. There was some local opposition to the housing scheme but eventually it went ahead, to the delight of all who live there.

My three bedroomed ground floor flat seemed huge after the caravan. Josh, who was then five was overwhelmed by the space. He came in from the garden and shouted "Mummy". I said I was in the kitchen, he replied "where's that?" Having spent most of his life within sight of me he followed me around, unable to appreciate that I was still there, even if I were in a different room.

I feel that my children have been privileged to grow up in Litton. It may not offer all the amenities of a town, but for a group of small children open fields, animals, a river, trees and farm tracks are their adventure playground. Imagination runs riot in an environment which is made safer because the children know everyone in the village and can call at any house if they have a problem.

There may be times that it can feel claustrophobic when your neighbours know your every move, but the fact that help is available from many sources is ample compensation.

As my children have got older they have begun to think differently about living in Litton. Amy moved to the bright lights of Skipton when she was eighteen. Simeon, seventeen, is at college studying gamekeeping, but comes home every weekend. He believes Litton to be an ideal place to live, and can't imagine anyone wanting to live anywhere else. Edward is fifteen and I spend quite a lot of time running him up and down the dale to meet his social needs. Jenny, thirteen and Josh, eleven, still enjoy playing with their friends in the village.

I have mixed feelings. Part of me is pleased that new people bring new ideas and variety to the village, but another part of me yearns for the traditions of a strong farming community that is disappearing. But times change. I have changed, having spent three years travelling to Leeds to do a degree, I realise that it is often necessary to move closer to work.

I will always be an "off cumden", but my children are part of an old dales family, I am glad they have their roots in Littondale. I hope that whatever the future holds for them they will look back with fondness on an idyllic childhood spent in Litton.

**Life in Litton. Jenny Turner (aged 13 years)**

I think Litton is a perfect place, it is quiet but not too quiet, everyone is friends. I moved here about ten years ago and everyone has been so nice and friendly. We all play together and play games like kit the can and hide and seek round the outgangs. We also build tree houses by the rivers and streams and round the outgangs.

We live in a house which is close to each other because the house we live in used to be barns and when they got made into houses we were asked to live here. We were closer to our friends.

The village is just right its not too big and not too small its just right and everyone is friends and get along and that's the way I like it.

**My Life in Litton. Josh Turner (age 11 years)**

I have lived in Litton most of my life at first we lived in a caravan then we got 3 Armistead Barns (where we live now). I live right next to my best friend (Jack Lund). We have lots of fun and can play without adult supervision. I have just left Arncliffe and have just started Upper Wharfedale. Arncliffe was the best school I have ever been to. I love all the animals around here.

