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## Manor Cottage—Litton

Manor Cottage as we now see it dates from 1911 according to the second of two date stones above the porch archway. "Manor Cottage restored 1911 JHH". James Henry Hartley probably purchased the property around 1905 as he negotiated a water supply agreement in August of that year with Elizabeth Stansfield. Whether the property was simply empty then or dilapidated it is not possible to tell. The last entry in the census records for the property adjacent to the Queens Arms is in 1881 when the occupants were Elizabeth Rhodes and her son William aged 33 a general labourer. According to the census records from 1851 onwards, the house was variously occupied by Alice Ayrton who even at the age of 72 described herself as a farmer and her son Richard and later by Sarah Bentham the widow of an agricultural labourer. The restoration was quite significant, particularly the addition of a whole new section of building on the left hand side of the house closest to the Queens Arms which provided an internal staircase to the upper floor of the house, and in the replacement of the mullioned windows by the Edwardian sash casements seen today. However there are still traces in the walls of earlier windows and a fairly clear line of end stones which mark the extent of the original building. A recess on the upstairs landing strongly suggests that there may have been an external stone staircase access to the upper floor prior to the 1911 renovations.

The earlier date stone set in the front wall of the house is 1707 HTG. One of the earliest entries in the Registers of the Ancient Parish of Arncliffe 1663 to 1812 is that of the marriage of a Hugh Gregeson of Litton to a Margaret Ward on 28 May 1672. They had five children, two daughters Agneas and Elizabeth and three sons, Henry baptised on 4 July 1680, Thomas baptised on 28 March 1683 and Christopher baptised on 22 September 1685. Whilst there are no further entries in the register for this family after 1685, they are the only family associated with Litton until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century with a surname beginning with the letter "G". Thus it is perhaps not unreasonable to speculate that the house was built either by Hugh Gregeson (and the traces of what could be a "W" in the centre of the date stone might refer to his wife Elizabeth Ward) or by his son Henry who would have been 27 years of age by 1707.

The design of the original house, (the roof timbers and large stone fireplace testifying to its age) is not dissimilar to that of a typical Yeoman's house as described by Arthur Raistrick in "Old Yorkshire Dales", with its simple bay format with a very large stone fireplace in a deep wall, which is still seen today in what is now used as the sitting room.

It is possible that there is something in the name given to the house. Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby in their book "The Yorkshire Dales" say: "Next to the Queen's Arms, Manor Cottage with the inscription 'HTG 1707', is on the site of the manor house." We do not know when the name was first given to the house. Whether or not there was a manor house in Littondale is also not clear, but the answer might lie in the records of Sawley Abbey who owned the land upon which the current house stands up until the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the mid sixteenth century when the yeomen of the dale started to purchase the farm lands and build their houses.

Whatever the speculation about the house's more distant past, the house figures in Harry Battersby's notebooks. The first owner mentioned, James Henry Hartley was a draper in Skipton. He bought both the pub and Manor Cottage and the land with the pub. That is how Hartley's meadow's and Hartley's barn came about. Henry and his wife Mary, lived in the cottage in summer. Battersby describes Henry as the first commuter in the Dale. He apparently left for work on the Monday morning and returned on Saturday night, first by train to Grassington and thence by cycle to Litton. Apparently Henry removed the lane between High and Low Bancroft and sold stone from the walls for building of the roads and got away with it!

In 1927 the house was sold by Mary Hartley to Edgar Charles Woodman. Battersby notes after an account of putting an electric generator into Barn Garth in 1927: "The only other house in the village with electricity was Woodman's Manor Cottage. They had an indoor WC too!" There remain traces, to this day, in what is now the boiler house of the huge iron bolts, which secured that first generator. The Woodman's had a maid and a cook when they visited Litton. When Edgar Woodman died one of his sons, Frederick (Derry) persuaded his mother to let him stay on at Manor Cottage and he rented Elle Beck Farm. Battersby says that Derry squandered money right left and centre, was always hard up, but his Ma let him have more. He was fined so many times for driving whilst drunk, the Magistrate said; "it's no good fining this man" and sent him to Armley gaol for 4 weeks.

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In the early 1950's the house was sold to George Sweeting and the crofts and the barns were sold to Tom Cowan. George Sweeting was a geologist. Peggy Chapman who started working for him around 1958 says that the house was so full of cabinets of stones and piles of magazines and books that you could hardly get into the house for them.

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David bought the house as a holiday home and also to enable him to see his daughters who were at school in Bolton by Clitheroe. In the early days he would frequently pick

up the girls and bring them over for the weekend. Latterly however the cottage was more and more let for the use of holiday visitors, which of course is how we came to be associated with Litton and with Manor Cottage.

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Since moving here we have put in a new kitchen, redecorated inside and out and started to attack the overgrown garden at the back. However, as the latter is a haven for birds—including an owl sighted over this side of the dale for the first time for years, according to Stephen Lund, we don't want to prune too much away. House sparrows nest under the eaves and a bat was seen resting in the ivy but, fortunately, didn't stay. Bish is fascinated by wild flowers and insects, so one of the attractions of the area is the Dales National Park Authority's encouragement of wild flower meadows and the uncropped verges. Richard enjoys the quiet of the Dales to read, do his tapestry and listen to music, but we all like the sounds of the sheep and cattle and are concerned about the plight of the Dales farms in today's market. Coming from a large city, we appreciate the openness of Littondale and the individuality and quality of the local shops in Grassington and Settle but recognise the disadvantages of lack of public transport and regret that even the sale of fresh eggs in the village has ceased. We both look forward to Richard's retirement when we shall let the house less and spend more time in Litton ourselves.

Richard and Bish Clark—August 2000

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