

Arthur Harris, a former Heswall resident now living in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, shares his family memories of Heswall...

My personal Heswall involvement goes back to the day I was born, some 87 years ago!

Sometime around 1920 my mother's sister Elsie entered domestic service with the Clegg family, who lived near the Devon Doorway hotel. Elsie's stories must have set the fire alight in the eyes of her three sisters because my mother, Hilda Davies, along with her sisters Evelyn and Gwendolyn, all made their way into domestic service in Heswall – this appealed to their parents because Elsie had become a married lady! Elsie had left the Clegg family and opened a draper's shop in Pensby Road. She had married into a well-known retired local farming family by the name of Hughes. The Hughes family embraced the collection of these three young females with great delight and in turn introduced them to a member of their own family, Edith Cameron.

My mother initially worked at Skivelooms, a house in Lower Heswall. Being a very musical person it wasn't long before she was enjoying the Saturday night 'hops' in the Village Hall. At the same time, my father, who was a semi-professional footballer playing for Heswall FC, also found the call to attend these Saturday night hops. And, as they say, the rest is history.

Some time about 1924, Edith and Jack Cameron moved to Dale Farm to assist Jack's family in running the farm, also aided by Edith's brother Willy. Edith encouraged the group young of people, now her friends, to visit her at the farm. Over the years up to the 1939 war, many visits were made – picnics, cricket and a lot of fun kept farm life happy. The war disturbed these halcyon days and visits became less frequent.



The Cameron family in the 1930s

Around 1940/1941 the 'blitz' moved Aunt Elsie and Uncle Harry Hughes to consider that young Arthur (me) should spend more time in Heswall away from the bombing in Liverpool. Mother and father agreed.

Heswall was my oyster and I lost no time in renewing my uncle's association with the Common, the Water Tower, and the Quarry. Last, but not least, Dale Farm and the 'Dales'. Helping Willy to move the cows into a new cowshed, and being sprayed with milk from Willy's milking always made a little boy happy! Poor old Aunt Edith's son Barney had to go to school and couldn't share these mad times!

After many years, my new fiancée Margaret and I went to visit Aunt Elsie Hughes and in the process met Barney Cameron. Renewing old times, it didn't take long before it was realised that Barney not only knew Margaret's father in Customs and Excise but had also worked with him in Scotland!

As a busy housewife wife with young children, my wife Margaret had little time to chase up her family tree, but a series of recent coincidences have revealed that her family originated from Heswall, with ancestors in the district of Oldfield since the 16th century. Several roads bear the 'Oldfield' family name, and there is obviously Oldfield Farm. Margaret's mother lived in Heswall in her later years, only yards from the crossroads.

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When I stopped doing my Dale Farm stories for *Heswall Magazine* nearly 18 months ago I never thought I would ever end up coming back again, but surprises do happen. This isn't actually a history of the farm as I did in the past, but it's about another member of the McGrath/Cameron family that I've been in touch with.

Before Christmas I was looking on Facebook to see if there were any updates about Dale Farm. While looking, I came across this brilliant old photo showing the old farmhouse cottage and the old cottage garden wall that used to be there. The lady who owns the photo is Sue Westall, who is related to Sandy Cameron, another relative of the family who has been in my articles in the magazine and in my book.

The people you see at the front door are Edith Cameron, the owner of Dale Farm, and the lady next to Edith is Sue's mum who was Edith's niece – so Sue is Edith's great-niece. Sue told me they had holidays there, as did many people in the holiday chalet as again mentioned in my earlier articles. I hope you all find this interesting and like the photo in this edition of *Heswall Magazine*.

My next pieces will be photos I take of particular historic buildings round West Wirral and surroundings and some history of these.

By Mark Kinnish