

GRANGE KIRKCALDY

Farmer and Gardener

Grange Kirkcaldy joined the A.S. in G.B. in England in 1932 was welcomed into it by D. N. Dunlop, who said to him, "You can join my group". But this was not possible, for shortly before retiring from the Army, for reasons of health, he had acquired a home in Aberdeenshire. It was a fine old Manse with a glebe, a good steading and a large walled garden. It was renamed Lodge of Auchindoir. Here Grange was able to take up farming and gardening according to Bio-Dynamic methods. He did so with enthusiasm. When the glebe was well in hand, he was fortunate in being able to lease an adjacent small farm as an outrun for stock and to augment cropping.

When beginning to farm, Grange went as a pupil to a well-known farm in the county to learn the current orthodox practices, for he held it essential to have at least some degree of ordinary professional "know-how" when embarking on B.D. methods. He also considered that an understanding should be gained of the Organic school. In a letter he wrote in 1944 to someone about to take up farming he gave a brief outline of the different schools of thought, finding that they had many factors in common. "We have a cosmology", he wrote specifically of the B.D. work, "a certain conception of the earth and the life on it and the life of nature that surrounds it; a certain body of knowledge and a certain purpose for its application. This application is being steadily added to by our own work, experience and research. We gladly integrate the knowledge and experience of others, from whatever source, which is in line with our conception and purpose, and we endeavour to understand and appreciate the concepts and experience of others though we may not use them. We also try to keep in touch with the latest scientific experiments. ..."1

His mind was very active and he was constantly thinking of ways and means by which he could implement his ideas and also gain more knowledge. He was fortunate in having near at hand the North of Scotland College of Agriculture, the Rowett Research Institute and other institutions which were always willing to supply information, analyse soil or silage samples and discuss ideas. Some warm personal friendships grew up out of these contacts.

Farming and gardening were quite a new venture for Grange. He was nineteen when the First World War started, and in his first year at Corpus Christi Cambridge. He left at once to join the Army, and after the Armistice, in 1919, volunteered to go to Russia with the Relief Force, returning to his Regiment after recovering from a severe wound, and serving until 1932. But he took to his new life like a duck to water. Dairying became his chief enterprise. Starting in a modest way to supply T.T. milk for his own household he found there was a demand for it in the district so the dairy expanded and a milk round was started first with a bicycle and later with a three-wheel van. When the Milk Recorder paid his regular visits, he learnt something about Anthroposophy as well as seeing the development of B.D. methods. The milk records were very creditable, which gave Grange much encouragement and in due course his father bought a farm for him of about 120 acres in the crook of the River Don, near Inverurie. The main enterprise here was

1* Family Post Bag by Mildred Robertson Nicoll. Hodder & Stoughton, 1947.

production and replacement of dairy heifers, Shorthorns (not pedigree) and arable crops. It was about twenty miles from Auchindoir, and he was able to go to and fro from there to superintend with an old grieve and his wife living in the farmhouse.

At that time silage making was somewhat of an innovation though in Aberdeenshire it was already being practised, and a silo was built at Auchindoir. But Grange also made one of the "do it yourself" experiments he and his children enjoyed. This was to make some silage themselves and see what the results were. A green crop of oats and peas was led in in a pony cart and chopped in a hand-driven chaff cutter with the help of two boys, or "loons" as they were called in Scotland, to turn the cutter. The silage was stored in 4 ft. diameter water pipes, sunk in the ground and consolidated by two small daughters. Black treacle was added, layer by layer, with a garden watering can. Grange was a great believer in black treacle for the health of human beings and of animals. A farmer's daughter once told him that on their farm the runt of a litter was always given black treacle. He liked to hear the old lore of the countryside, and took delight in the country sayings and laconic wit of the North-East countryman.

One of his friends was a nearby farmer of the old school, who was full of native wisdom and of manual skill. He was very willing to teach an apt pupil and through him, Grange learned to plough. He was very proud of ploughing a good, straight furrow, but still of being able to turn successfully and neatly a "gushet neuk" that is to say, an awkward unsymmetrical corner of a field.

He was perhaps, never happier than when following his plough and pair of glossy horses with their well-polished harness. He loved horses, especially Clydesdales, and the countryside was never the same to him again when, after the Second World War, almost complete mechanisation of farming took place. He had remained on the Army reserve and, on the outbreak of war, was told to report to Aberdeen. He was given a Staff job, which necessitated living there and occupied all his time. With the help of an excellent grieve, who was also a faithful friend, things were kept going at Auchindoir, but lacking Grange's personal supervision, the farm on the Don was difficult to manage, so was sold in 1942. When the war was over he had in mind to buy another, larger place, but circumstances had changed and his work for Anthroposophy developed in other directions. Auchindoir was also eventually sold, and he continued to live in Aberdeen making his home a centre for his Group meetings and horticultural B.D. work, with the making of the Preparations and other activities. At the back of the house was a typical town small lawn, shrubs and border. It was a very sunless and lay below an embanked road. He transformed this into a very prosperous kitchen garden, not only useful for the house but for demonstrating what could be done by careful B.D. Treatment. Many visitors came to see him, and it was an advantage to be able to show them a practical example. There was a small garden in front of the house with a good aspect and a lawn that was sprayed regularly, to its great benefit, when the flower beds around it were being done. The beds suffered from drip and shade from trees during the summer and autumn, so the main enterprise was spring flowering bulbs.

In 1978 analyses of soils from the garden were made by the Macaulay Research Institute. The love and care spent on these soils over the years is quite evident in their analyses.

Grange had always valued the good relationship of the Soil Association and the B.D.A.A., and was very pleased to have a visit from Lady Eve Balfour, who gave a much-appreciated lecture.

His bees had been brought to this garden from Auchindoir, but it did not prove a satisfactory move. They were too close to the road, and the traffic, and were liable to swarm in inconvenient places. So they were returned to the country and put within reach of heather. Grange liked to attend to them as much as possible himself. In an article he wrote for The Golden Blade of 1966, entitled "Dynamics of Nutrition", he pointed out how inseparable the subject of nutrition is from the production of crops and husbandry in general, and what an important part honey plays in diet, quoting the saying of Rudolf Steiner that, "By way of the beehive the whole Cosmos enters into man and makes him strong and able".

Ever since Grange joined the B.D.A.A., the making of the preparations had been of absorbing interest to him. He brought to every stage of the work meticulous care, for Anthroposophia was the Mother from which the BD work sprang. So nothing less than the best and most conscious efforts possible could be offered. Writing of the development of BD agriculture, he said in his letter quoted earlier that "... it should correspond with the development of human consciousness, itself an expression of the Divine Plan".

MILDRED KIRKCALDY.