

# Meet James, Helen, & Siegfried...



*Simon Ward and James Herriot.*



*Lisa Harrow and Helen Herriot.*

We fastened our seatbelts and headed north on a beautiful sunny, misty, September morning. We had spent the night in a delightful pub where the gracious landlady had promised us the previous evening a bed and “the best breakfast in Yorkshire!” Sure enough! Cereal, fried eggs, bacon, ham, sausage, mushrooms, lots of bread and butter, toast, marmalade and tea—all (bed and breakfast) for two pounds and fifty pence (eleven dollars for two!).

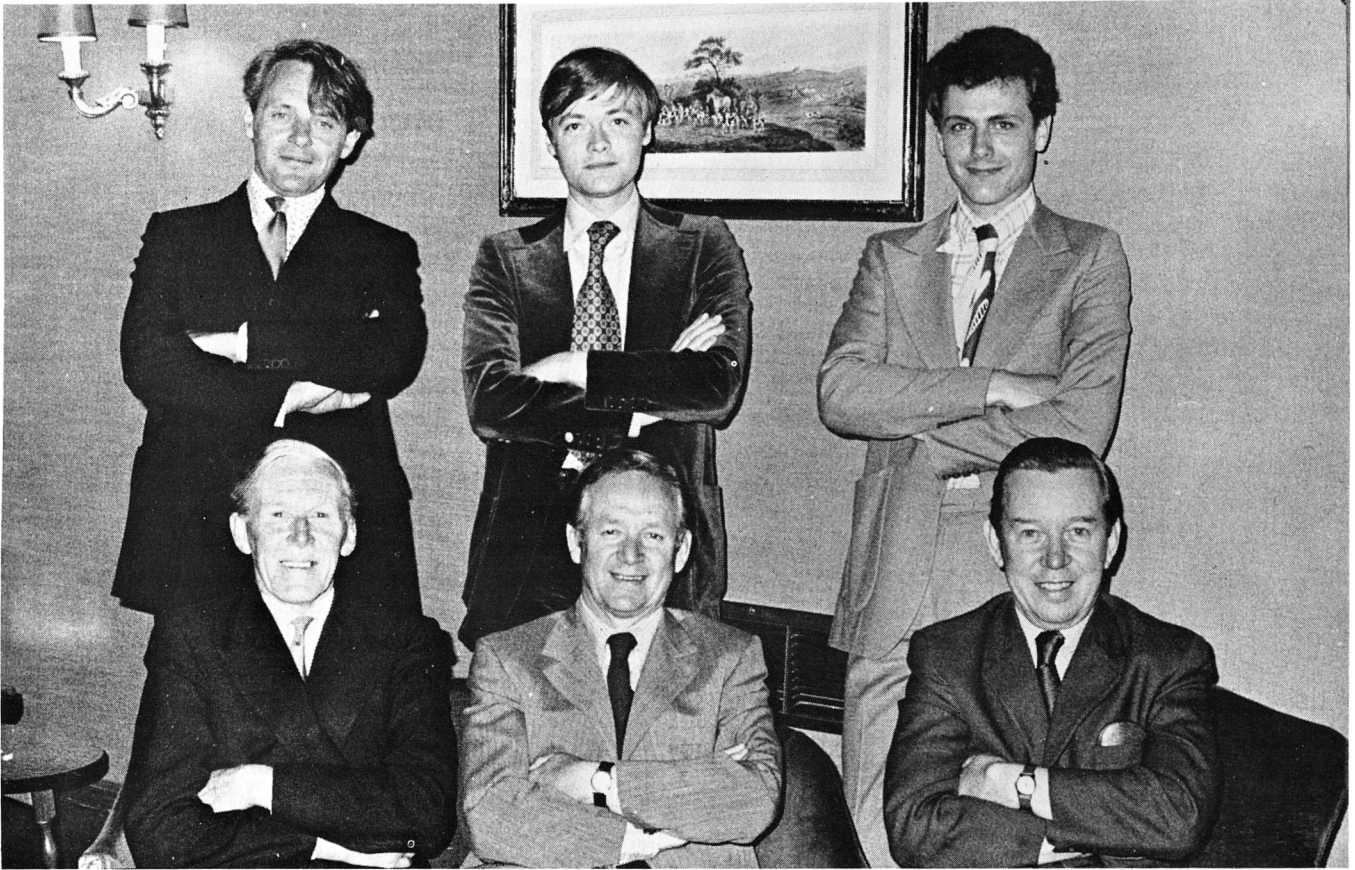
Soon we were to have our first glimpse of Darrowby! Just like most other towns no matter where you travel, someone is always tearing up the streets! So it was here, in the narrow winding street on the east side of town. We soon reached the famous market square with the cobbled streets, the central clock, the post office, quaint shops and artistic pubs. We pulled up and asked a short, stocky man wearing a cloth cap for directions to “the vet who writes good books.”

“Ye, I know him,” was the instant reply, with a sparkle of pride in his eyes. “I clean his chimneys for him, a grand lad!” We followed his detailed instructions and found ourselves on the doorstep of the most famous ivy-covered house in Darrowby. We rang the bell and were soon greeted by a

very attractive Yorkshire lass dressed in a trim white coat. She ushered us along the famous corridors into the office where we were given a royal welcome by James Herriot and his partner, Siegfried Farnon. In a matter of minutes we were enjoying light refreshments and felt as if we had known each other for many years. Tristan Farnon was not on hand. He is employed at a veterinary investigation laboratory several miles away. James



*The market square.*



*The stars and the characters get together during the recent filming in Yorkshire . . . front row: Stegfried, James, Tristan; back row: Anthony Hopkins, Simon Ward, Brian Sterner.*

Herriot's son, who also graduated from Glasgow, was away on his honeymoon. Mary and I spent the rest of the day riding around with James Herriot and his two companions. It was just like old times driving on the left side over winding roads and opening gates! It was a beautiful, sunny September day. Even the cases were familiar, including the inevitable downer cow! In spite of a busy schedule, our host continuously pulled up his car at suitable

vantage points so that we could get out to view the gorgeous hills and dales of the North Riding of Yorkshire.

Helen, as expected, was a delightful hostess. Both husband and wife have taken their fame with remarkable ease. James is obviously still surprised at the enormous success of his books. He did not start writing until he was over fifty years old and his first manuscripts stayed in a drawer for several



*"Gates to open . . ."*



*His faithful companions, Dan and Hector.*



*The peaceful dale.*



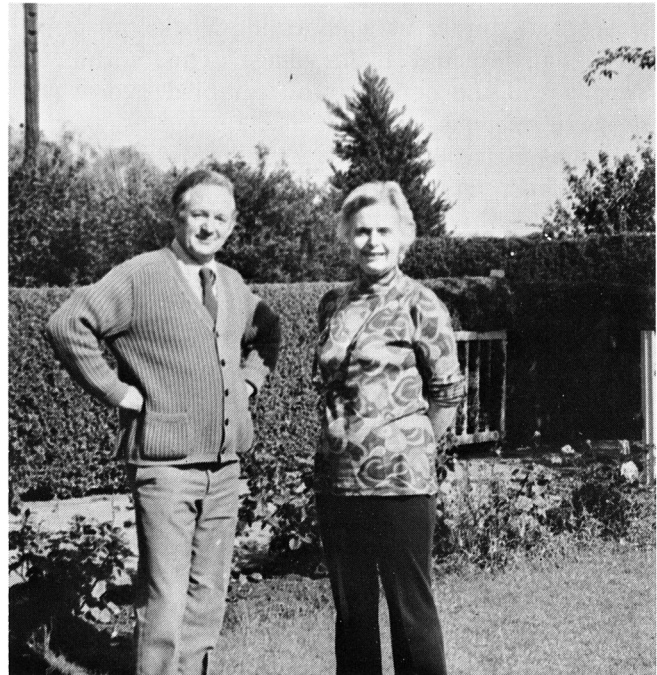
*A farmhouse in the dale.*



*“Up here, the trappings of civilization seemed far away . . .”*

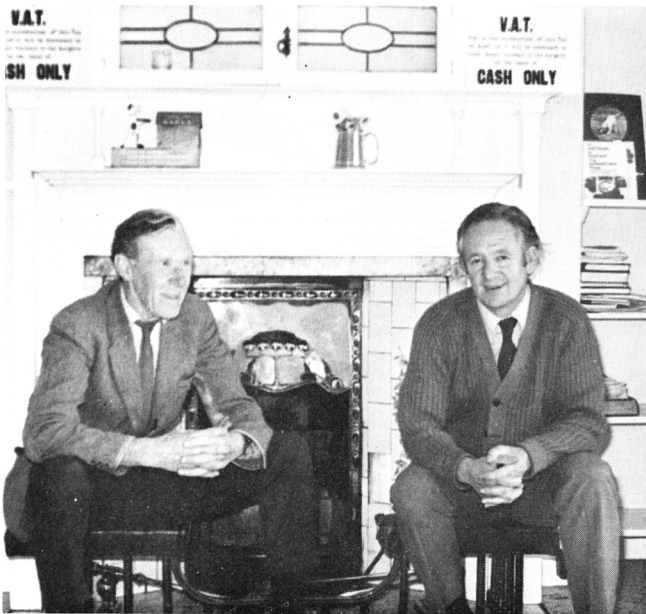
months until Helen persuaded her husband to send it to a certain publisher who immediately recognized its potential. It is remarkable that these manuscripts were published as written with hardly any revisions. The most interesting feature about James Herriot, the famous author, is the very obvious immense satisfaction he derives from the tons of letters he receives from all over the world. His books make even the most hardened hill farmer shriek with laughter. He told us with pride that his books have been translated into twelve languages, including Japanese.

During the past summer James and Helen, Siegfried and Tristan met their counterparts for the movie which was filmed in Yorkshire recently. The film, which carries the same title as the book, *All Creatures Great and Small*, will be shown on television in the United States during February and will be released for the cinemas in Britain towards the end of this year. Siegfried has enjoyed this venture enormously and especially what he called “those lavish parties which appeared to be bottomless!” (not physically!).



*James and Helen at home.*





*"When the bills were paid, the cash went into the pint pot on the mantelpiece."*

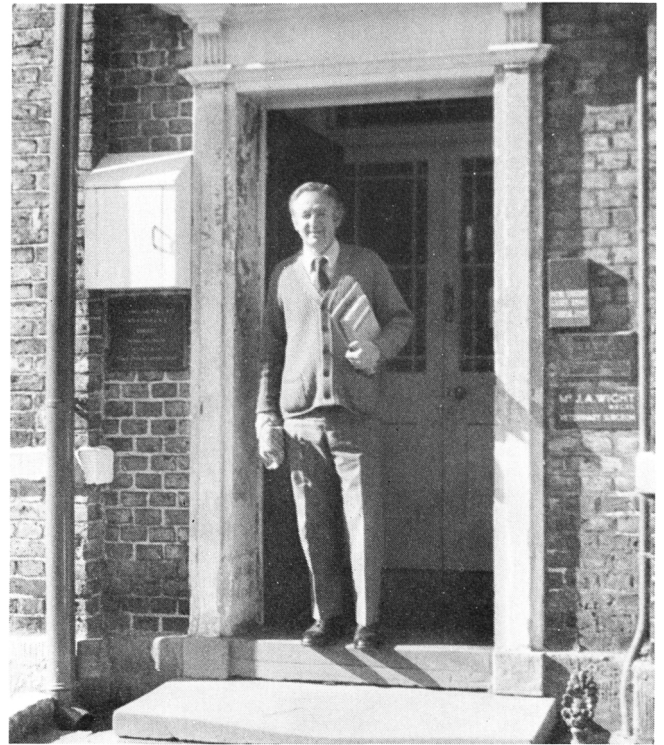
Siegfried Farnon is now a grey haired, slender gentleman with a distinct twinkle in his eye. He and his gracious wife and very delightful daughter live in a country mansion overlooking a beautiful valley. The "happy hour" at this stately home before we went out with James and Helen for dinner was a memorable event. Siegfried's philosophy is that "life is a bowl of cherries." James and Siegfried obviously get along together very well.

We had dinner at a charming Yorkshire pub in an equally quaint little village. The cuisine was superb and the conversation rambled over a wide range of subjects.

James Herriot has made a wise decision. In his own words, "A lot of people are quietly watching me to see when my unexpected literary success is



*"That will fix him, Mr. Herriot."*



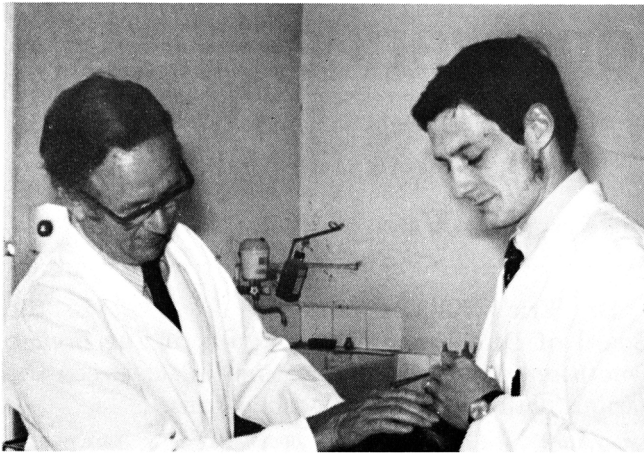
*Time for the morning rounds.*

going to wean me away from such things as disbudding calves, castrating colts, etc., but these things are my way of life and I am hanging on to them grimly. I have had immense fun from writing, but I am a veterinarian." James and Helen have had two hectic publicity tours in the United States, but they had to turn down a request for another visit coinciding with the publishing of his latest book, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, because, as he remarked, "My son is getting married, who



*James and his client who suggested the title for his first book.*





*The surgeons.*

will take care of the practice?" He has been inundated with requests to speak at a wide range of functions, but due to the pressure of practice he has had to refuse them for the time being.

James Herriot is a warm, friendly veterinarian who has done an enormous public relations service for his profession.

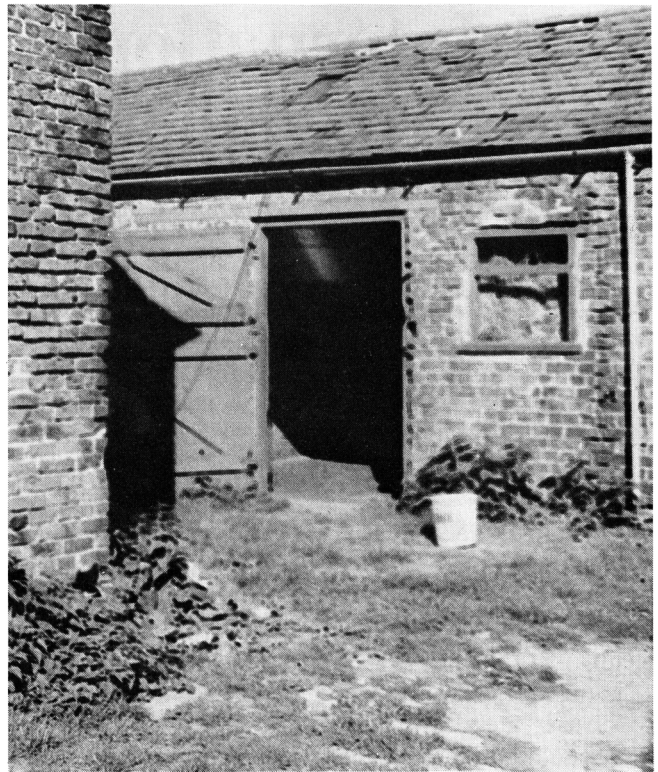
James has already written about 10,000 words for his next book which is based on his wartime service in the Royal Air Force. There is no history of any journalists in the family. James Herriot grew up in the heart of Glasgow, Scotland. His father was a renowned concert pianist and his mother was a famous singer, possessed of a rich soprano voice. Is James Herriot a musician? He certainly loves music, but I venture to suggest that his musical heritage is being expressed in the beauty of his written words and the easy flowing melodious style of an honest, dedicated journalistic genius.

We left the charming pub and returned to the Herriot home where we continued our conversation over several cups of tea. We will always cherish this wonderful sunny September day in Darrowby, including the traditional cup of tea in bed the next morning!

(This article was prepared following a visit to the Herriots recently by the editor and his wife.)



*"What's on the books?"*



*Through the open door, the pigs "belted out at full gallop—and shot off into the market place at about fifty miles an hour."*



*The window at the top of Skeldale House where Helen waved goodbye.*