

## **Sidney & Betty Reynoldson, of Thwaite (Betty formerly of Calvert Houses)**

‘We’ve always had them these buildings, they’ve always been there. Used to have cows in them and hay. And we used to have to go round them mebbe twice a day, didn’t we? Yes it used to take us all morning to water them - you know, turn them out... They were tied up by the neck...chained, weren’t they, round the neck...not allowed today.’

**Q: How many cow’usses would you go round in a day?** ‘There’d be five or six, there’s Big Close, Old Bills, there’s Dungeon, Moor Close, .....yes, five or six. Some held three, some held four. Not a lot some of these... And they were tied up by th’neck. And next door there was hay...there was hay at one side and mebbe on top, on baux, hay on that as well, above the cows, there was a little bit.’

‘After haytime, it was put in the barn. That was horrible. I hated mewing. We called it mewing. It was forked in loose wasn’t it? And someone had to be in to tread it, to get as much in as possible. By the time you got to the top, it was terrible; I hated that job’. **Q: Dark and dusty was it?** ‘Yes, and hot...horrible.’

**Q: Were you doing that on your own Betty?** ‘Oh no, me sister, and probably me mother, would be in the mew. I got out of that job, I took the horses over. We used to have to sweep it, sweep the hay to the byre or the pikes. We snicked pikes...and then they were forked in...I just led the horse.’

‘You avoided that (hay being forked in on top of you in the mew), but when you started, you could get it on your head, when it was chucked down.’ **Q: Was it dark?** ‘Well, there was light from the forking hole. It all depends how fast the fella was chucking it in...you could see enough to see where you were, you just followed the wall round. Tramped it right round to the slates; then when you were under the slates, you had to push it in. It wants to be good hay like, you didn’t want rubbish in. And next day, it had gone down...settled down itself.’

‘We used to cut it (the hay) down at back end. We used to put a chalk mark where it would go...the door into the cow’uss below was in the middle (not below the forking hole) so we marked where the door below was, you had to

find that otherwise you were in trouble...it was same as with the bottom cow'uss, forking hole was at the back and t'door was somewhere else.'

'I know it's a lot better nowadays, when buildings are all together...you had to go here and there, there was one building what we had up at Moor Close, it was quite a way to go to that, we mebbe, just mebbe, used to go once to that. There's a lot of these buildings, they all had a trough near...all near water, such as our Dungeons, and over there and all them, within feet of byres they had water...well some of them had a yard round with water in corner. So they'd build them where there was water. That's what I always thought.'

'We'd just let them (the cows) out to go and have a drink. While they were out you fothered them. In 1947 there was a bit of trouble then because all was frozen up, you had to dig the wells out for them, cos you couldn't chuck snow in for them for water...I can remember me father breaking all t'ice.

**Q: Cows can drink a lot of water?** 'Oh quite a lot, you'd be surprised.'

**Q: Once the cow'usses were empty in the summer what went on then?** 'Well we whitewashed ours all out (at Calvert Houses). Cleaned them all out and whitewashed them, ready for winter.' 'They didn't get all whitewashed.' 'Oh we used to do all ours, well we didn't have as many as you mebbe.' 'Just cow'uss side. All muck would be cleaned out. There was muck to go...from every cow'uss. All cleaned out, all onto the land. Spread muck.' **Q: So all whitewashed out ready for the next winter ready for the cows to come back in?** 'Yes, one of the back end jobs.'

'These buildings were well made like, lot of these cow byres, they were all well made. ...I tell you, I was once on wi' a fella and he came and said, "*What's all them 'throughs' sticking out there, those truffs?*" I said, "*They're for birds to shelter under on a windy day*" [lots of laughter]. He said, "*I'm not blimmin' believing that!*"

**Q: So, you never came across anybody in one of your buildings who shouldn't have been in there?** 'No, not really. The odd tramp sometimes, odd tramps, bedded down...Laurie Peacock once went to Banty cow'uss to feed beasts up there; he got hold of some hay and got hold of a fella's leg, a

tramp...no, can't say we ever had any regulars...except that door that was scorched at Millhome, down at Scar House there. There's somebody had been in there and used it for, like a buffet, a what do y'call it...and scorched the door.' **Q: Did they put the door back on?** 'No it were just left aye. It'd be somebody having a BBQ or summat. They could have set the house on fire, they could've couldn't they? But I don't think there was any hay in't just at that moment.'

'I've seen it (poorly made hay) come out like tobacco. By it's dangerous when it's like that. In the middle it could be brown. Lovely smell, but brown. Sheep used to like it, down here on Well Close, down there we had a shed put up...sixty years since...just had it tekken down. And in there was bigger and we used to put a chimney up the middle of the hay mew and then sweat would sweat out...when you went to the hay it could be sort of like dew on the top, where it had come up.'

**Q: Do you still use your little old stone buildings?** 'Some of them we do. Mebbe winter a few hogs in or something like that. Yes, mainly sheep, lambing time, yows and lambs. They're handy just to pop in, that's mainly what they're for. At Old Bills, on there at lambing time, mebbe put two or three sheep in of a night if it's a bad night.'

'Old Bills - that's like a double building, had cows at both ends and in the middle there's a pathway, you could fother either side. Aye, there was three cows tied the one side and three on the other, and a gangway. And gangway came out at t'hay mew. It ran the length of the two buildings.'

'It's not many years since we put hay in, not that long. But you see you don't fork hay now, you make bales you see. Used to put bales in it.' **Q: Trevor still makes a few small bales?** 'Oh yes...but he doesn't like 'em.'

'We've put hay this year in't Moor Close. We did all Moor Close, I wasn't up there, put it all into one building, up Moor Close. Just hit them three fine days, did you put any in't Dungeon? . . . No, because it came wet didn't it? You had to big bale it. We did quite a bit of hay.'

**Q: Is it easier to keep it up at Moor Close?** ‘Oh yeah, year before they all big baled it...but they got it this time. It’s handy for sheep up there.’

‘It’s a lot different nowadays with these big buildings. Go in and do cattle, do ‘em in little time, where we used to go round in. It’s all bulk these days isn’t it, there’s nothing small about it...even the tractors get bigger ‘Aye Sidney used to go one way and I used to go t’other didn’t we when there was all to water and that....I think it was quieter, more enjoyable than now. It’s all rush, rush nowadays in’t it?’

(Adapted from the 18th November 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)