

**Jenny Harker, formerly of Ravenseat, and after marriage - Pry House Farm**

‘I know at Ravenseat, we used to have one horse, sometimes two horses, in a stable that joined on the house and we used to have to go and clean them out before we went to school. One of us would clean them out, and the other would give them hay, these two horses. But of course, that was just in winter when they were in.’

‘I started going t’moor with dad when I was ten because I was off school for a while, and I used to go out with him on the moor, feed the sheep in winter.

**Q: Any buildings up there?** No, the hay all got taken from round the farmyard, round about. Used to take hay on a horse and sledge, you know, and feed them, but no, we didn’t have any buildings out on the moor then. They started coming later on, in probably 50s, 60s when people started keeping hay up on the moors. **Q: Is that when the railway huts came?** Yes, there was a real chance to get these, I mean, they were the salvation to hill sheep farmers right up on the tops because you could buy one of these old railway containers, they were selling them off cheap and most farms got one or two and had them put out on the moor and then late summer, early back end, filled them up with hay so that when blizzards came, you could feed them because the road probably was blocked. By then the horses had all gone, and there were just tractors and such-like, and if the road was blocked, you just had to walk to them and give them hay out of these, so, yes, they were a salvation.’

‘We had two (sheds) near together. One wasn’t a railway carriage, the other was just a more small, small wooden shed that me uncle had bought and put it together up on the moor. Because there was two heughs of sheep there, so it meant you could keep more hay...and them sheds, one in particular, the railway one, saved those two Dutch lads. Saved their lives, absolutely, no doubt about it...’

This was in March (winter of 1979). The worst blizzard that year was in February, but this happened in, I think, around 8th, 10<sup>th</sup> March, something like that, and it was another blizzard. That year, January, February, March, we had three blizzards and those blizzards, more or less, lasted nearly four days non-stop and this one in March, started on, I can’t be sure...the Monday or the

Tuesday teatime and it just snowed and snowed and blew and just frightening really. By Friday morning about five o'clock before it was trying to come in light, we heard this car go up the road and to our best knowledge, that road was blocked by the time you'd got about a third of a mile up the road, but apparently not, this car went up and it woke Clifford and I up and we both said, "Well who on earth is that and where do they think they're going?". And no more said about it and Clifford knew when he had to walk, well at that stage yes, he had three lots of sheep. He would walk six miles, maybe more right round all these sheep, getting this hay out of these sheds and he thought he would come to this car, stuck, just up the road, but he didn't and he got right up to our moor, never came across them, and he thought, how did they get away with that? Anyway, that was the Friday, he came back. Well, we thought, they've managed or they've walked the other way, gone towards Kirkby Stephen. Anyway, on the Saturday the blizzard was still going strong, really bad. And Clifford set off again to these sheep and he'd probably done one lot I think, then came back off the other hill at the other side, came back to get hay out of these two sheds' **Q: Quite close to Beck Meetings?...**'Yes so quite a long way along, 3 or 4 miles to Beck Meetings, and then he'd been to Loogy. You see, and fed them, they were in field and they had hay in lofts there you see and I think he would go to them first then he would come back to Whitespots which is where these sheds were and then go to Beck Meetings, that's how I think he did it. Anyway, he got back to where these two sheds, maybe, what, two hundred yards apart, something like that. And he went to the one where he wanted the hay out of, and the sheep were hungry and around him and really bawling their heads off, and the blizzard was awful and above all that out of blizzard these two people, you could just see them through the blizzard and they wouldn't be a hundred or maybe fifty yards away, shouting at him and he thought, 'oh, who on earth and what is this?' and anyway, he fed his sheep and he went to them, not far across from this lot of sheep and said, it was them that had got stuck in the car early on the Friday morning and they were in Tail Bridge Hill which was the worst hill anywhere around here in my opinion, and their car was stuck and they stayed in the car from the Friday morning til the Saturday morning, and to get out of the car, they'd got the window down and they'd had to push the snow away from the window to get out, and instead of going forward, they came back on the road they'd travelled on, and that's how

they came to these wood sheds, and they went in there, on the probably I would have thought Saturday lunchtime kind of thing and they heard the dog bark. I only found out last year, that we never ever knew and always wondered why those two lads came out of that other shed just when Clifford was there, because they couldn't see him, they wouldn't be able to hear him, but apparently our dog, Fly, had barked. And the reason she barked was she sensed someone else strange in this other shed. And these two lads, Rolf had said *"listen, it's a dog, there must be somebody about"* and they came out and that's when Clifford saw them. So Clifford told them to go back into that shed where they were. He had about 80, 90 other sheep to feed and he would come back for them and they of course had to trust him, but that's what he did. And he set off to walk with them. They were neither of them equipped for anything like snow because they'd come from Holland and driven up from the south and one of them was losing his boot off...and we're talking now they were a good two and a half miles away, and as they turned back towards Pry House of course, they were facing the blizzard, which made it twice as bad and it was a heck of a struggle, a tremendous struggle, he got them back to Pry House. And he just came in and he said I've got two lads here, you'd better do something for them...one of them was in pretty bad shape, he was delirious, he kept wanting to sit down, and I've found out since he kept saying he wanted to sit down and die, he couldn't go any further, of course, they were just past it, but Rolf, the other one, was a stronger lad, and he helped Clifford keep the other one going. And in they came, covered in snow, frozen to death, shaking like leaves and one of them, not knowing where he was.

So, Clifford had other work to do, he went back out and just sort of left me and I had, we had our two children there...mebbe 13 and 11 or something like that, I can't remember...got them clothes and I said just stay there where you are in the hallway and I went through to the telephone and I rang our doctor, our GP. Told him what had happened, "What have I to do with them?" and he said "Let them have a very lukewarm bath", dry clothes of course, which they didn't have anything with them, but that wasn't a problem, "and then give them warm custard to have," because they hadn't eaten from the Thursday evening and this was Saturday tea time and through all that as well. So that's what I did

and all that day and still a little bit the following morning Rini (the other one) was still shaking ...he didn't know where he was and he wasn't as fit as Rolf that was why. But then afterwards of course, they stayed with us for, that was the Saturday, they left on the Wednesday and they had to leave their car behind of course...got a lift...to Hull and went back to Holland from Hull.'

'And one thing Clifford did that morning and we never ever knew why, he said to me, *"just put a little drop of whisky in a bottle, any bottle, just 3 or 4 tablespoonfuls"* which I did, and off he went and it was the only time in all them times he'd walked to that moor in a blizzard, he'd never have ever asked for it before and he never did again. We just don't know why, but when Clifford saw these two lads, before he left them to go to his sheep, said *"get that drunk"* and they did and then of course, I told our doctor later on, oh weeks later, he asked how we'd got on, and I said what Clifford had done, and he said, well giving them that little drop of whisky was the worst thing we could have done, he did (laughs) we couldn't believe it. And Rini and Rolf, in all that time, we've never ever missed getting a Christmas card. Rolf didn't keep in touch as much, but he's appeared again now, came and stayed at Pry House and came to see me and last year he filled me in on things that I never knew, on why they came out of that wood shed just when Clifford was there and that was because of the dog. You could probably say, the dog saved their life.'

**Q: Location of sheds?** 'They are a couple of hundred yards off the B6270 just East of Beck Meetings which is approx 3 / 4 miles west of Pry House'

(Adapted from the 13th October 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)