

Bill (Billy) Hutchinson, formerly of Cathole Inn & Keld Green

‘At the Cathole, there was a cow’uss there, it would hold four cows tied up ...and a hay mew alongside it. Well when we had the pub, the Cathole, we used to have to put new barrels under the bink and of course there was no pumps in them days so when the barrels was empty, or getting empty, you tipped the sediment, the last dregs of beer, into a bucket and me dad fed two bucketful’s to these two pigs. And next morning he went in to feed them and they were absolutely asleep, and he thought they were ill, so he got the vet and vet says what have you given them, and he says “*two buckets of beer*”, and he says, “*well, they’re sleeping it off!*” I think that must have been the first time, first and last I would think. It was underneath the Miners Arms (later Cathole), and it was just like a pig’ole and then there was a stable for a horse as well’.

At five years old, Billy moved to Keld Green:

‘Me dad was farming from there . . .just milk cows and followers ..three or four cow’usses all round, on Kisdon Side, on Willy Greens, Mary Field. Well, we had stock in them all, but I don’t think there is mebbe today, but we had stock in them. Hay mews . . .aye, was all loose hay then and then swept in by ‘oss (horse) in very first instance, and then we had old land wagons, before the tractors came.’

‘At finish we were milking 10 [cows], which was a lot for Keld Green [for two men]... we used to put quite a bit of milk out in them days. It went to Leyburn to Express Dairy’

Q: How many months were the cows wintered in the barns? ‘Well, they’d be in in September and they’d be right in I would think until first of June. We had to milk them by hand of course in the early stages, and then we got a milking machine and that made life easier ...**Q: So you milked the cows in the stalls, tied up?** Yes, tied up all the time. We had water bowls in...for the milk cows anyway. The other ones, the young stock had to go to the beck round about.’

Q: In about 1950 you made some alterations? ‘Yes, we altered the byre at Keld Green, so, it was for four, and then we extended through into some loose boxes to make another three and then we extended that into garage which

was to th'right of the byre and made that for another two, so we were actually milking nine, which was a lot in them days.'

Q: Why did you stop keeping cows in the cow'usses? 'Well, the cow'usses you see, they would be in the cow'usses while they were young stock and then they got calved and had a calf you see and of course we milked them at Keld Green and that's where we had our milking dairy ...it just had to be all renovated, you know, walls had to be renovated and boskins put in and that, so you could wash out and such-like, you couldn't do that in traditional cow'usses. Later on we got a milking machine, milking lines put in so more convenient.'

'I'll tell you an experience I had, going back quite a few years, before this garage was made into a place for two cows, to milk, cos we had the milking machine, we had it as a loose box, and we had two big stirks, about this big... well I went out this particular morning and there was one laid on its side, dead as a hammer, frothing at the mouth. And so, I jumped over the rail, got 'owd of its lug, and I just lifted its head up and it wasn't half frothing at the mouth and was stone dead, so I went across and told dad, who got the vet and it was bloody anthrax. And they said "who's been touching it?" and they said I had. Anyway they didn't get doctor or anything but they made me wash all me clothes, hands and everything and we dug a hole, just across from the cow'uss in Keld Green, there was like a bit of a slope, and we dug this hole and got half a ton of coal, half a ton of logs, and we had to burn this thing and it lasted for oh it must have been on a fortnight, burning ...that was a young heifer, yes, it had anthrax. And it had got it off some calf grower we were feeding it, so it just shows...the other one didn't get it and it was on gruel as well. So we contacted this firm and anyway, they withdrew that batch. It had come from abroad I think.'

Q: How many cow'usses came with Keld Green? 'We had five. Each one would have its own meadow and each one held about three or four cows. Wintered there, yes. Then of course, in summer time when the cows went out, the milk cows went out. They went right onto the top of Kisdon and me dad used to go on up there on a 1927 motorbike with a back can on and milk the cows b'hand and I was also. When I was about 14 or 15 year old, I had to go on another motorbike up with another back can, because we were milking about

8 or 9 cows then, and that was our sole income. Our milk really was the main income.'

Q: Could you get all the milk into two back cans? 'Yes, two back cans, then bring 'em back down to the farm, and then they were cooled, put in kits and out for the milk wagon for collection the next morning... no tanker, just can.'

(Adapted from the 14 Aug & 2 June 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)