

Bob & Dick Guy, formerly of Hill Top Lodge

‘The majority of the cow’usses were allus built up at the top of the field so the hay could be swept up easier and the muck which was heavier could be took down. And there’s generally four to five cows in every barn, unless they were big fields and they’d have up to ten standings....the cow byres that mebbe had ten there was cows on either end of a long barn, with the hay in the middle ...and the baux above ‘em. And they was always on the slope, with truffts [through stones] so any water could run out ...the truff binds the inside to the outside wall.’ **(Bob)**

‘There was lots of cowhouses built with limestone, and limestone let water in, and you will find today there’s lots of these barns on the end of a house that’s been renovated, have not been built as a house, where the outside stone is built on a slope to let the water run out if it gets in, and you’ll find that they’re quite damp and you have a problem with damp where they’ve been renovated...because a cow byre isn’t built same as a house you know. On a house all the stones are water shot, on a cow byre, you just plonked ‘em on, didn’t matter.’ **(Dick)**

‘A lot of the cow byres, a lot of the roofs, years ago, used to be all pegged wi’ sheep bones. And then it got to oak pegs. Yes, I’ve come across ‘em. You’d come across a lot of roofs wi’ sheep bones, but there’s not many left now, if any...then oak pegs and now there are aluminium nails. I have come across where what we call the latt [lath] where the peg was over, it’s been double lattted, there was a latt above it and it was to stop the peg, when there was pressure down, flicking back up.” “The trouble is wi’ wood pegs, t’old oak pegs, was if any water sorta blew in it used to swell the peg up and snap t’head of the slate’ **Q: So sheep bones were better?** ‘Yes. I used to have a packet, but I don’t know where they went to.’ **(Bob)**

Q: When taking roofs off did you find anything interesting? ‘Yes. I found plenty of the old tuppenny pieces which me son has, the old tuppenny ones which was quite thick and on two occasions , and the last one was on the house at West Stonesdale , which was me Uncle George’s house ...when I took the last slate off the front, the last one off, in between the first slate and the stone slate was a half crown, going back eighteen...it were very early one...and

they say they did it for luck...I always had a wish to find a gold sovereign .
When I thought I had done, it turned out to be an old farthing.' **(Dick)**

'They always used to start doing the barns, restoring the barns in spring and there used to be always, every time you took the roof off , there was always eggs and little birds in nests, that hadn't flown ...they were all destroyed because birds never came back to them, no.' **(Bob)**

'A biggish cow byre allus had a, like a square ladder, to let the air, cos if you hadn't that it could fire...we had one at Hill Top hadn't we? Or a pole, I've known them just have a pole up...but they were normally a foot square ...let into the ground and tied onto one of the beams ...And if you didn't get hay right it used to steam didn't it? And all cow'usses had slits in them so air can get in.' **(Bob & Dick)**

'Today, if you do a roof, they might felt it an that you know, but if you were puttin hay, you couldn't felt it because the steam had to get out ...through the slates. If it was all felted it would come back down as water and t'would rot the hay.' (Bob) 'Good for growing mushrooms in though [laughter]. I have seen some with mushrooms growing on top.' **(Dick)**

'Where t'cows used to stand, you used to tie cows to one side and t'other side you know, and there were settle stanes (stones) in where they used to stand, and where muck went was t'group and what did they call back wall? ...Can't remember. Liggins was where cows stood? Aye, they were settle stanes weren't they ...where back legs stood on a cow and then front bit used to mebbe be just cobbles...A lot of cow'usses just had settle stanes and then the group, then you were right at t'back wall.' (Bob) 'They were the old ones. The more modern ones got to be flaggedand then of course concrete came in.' (Dick). 'The group . . . that was where the muck went in. And there used to be a hole to chuck muck out ...you had your horse to catch and then it was all to yoke up. Back to the muck, then fill up with a fork, mebbe get a dozen, half a dozen loads out, then it was time to go round watering cows for the night, that was your day gone. Used to leave it so long, muck heaps, and then spread it and then you used to have to go and scale it with fork to make it thinner, go further.' **(Bob)**

‘And we milked, sold milk, and me mother used to make cheese. She was a very good cheesemaker, but she always said it wasn’t the person who made the cheese, it was the field that the cows ate out of and we had a very good cow pasture there, extremely good one.’ **(Dick)**

‘Then when you’d finished milking, y’had y’breakfast , then somebody had to get hoss and cart to tek milk down and that was like a couple of hours job, y’know, it was a mile and a half down . And if me dad went to Leyburn, he used to send hoss back on its own and there’d be somebody at home to tek cart off it...our old Dinnie, if a gate had blown shut , it would open it, it could open it and used to walk over cattle grids!” **(Bob)**

Q: Do either of you regret going into the building trade, working on all these barns?

‘No, no. I enjoyed working on the barns, if the weather was right.’ **(Bob)**

‘The only thing I regret is, is now, at 83 I’m bad of me breathing, and it was only because, a lot of it, I was a smoker a heavy smoker, but most of it was taking all t’dust, there was no masks in those days. And the times I think when I got wet to the skin, absolutely sodden to the skin. Be up on moor then come back sodden and instead of getting changed, cos you’d be wanting to get out at night , there was mebbe a dance on somewhere, you went and you’d milk seven or eight cows by hand in your wet clothes and when you’re getting to 80 it catches you up I tell you.’ **(Dick)**

(Adapted from the 16th November 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)