

## **Tom & Annas Metcalfe of Usha Gap, Muker**

Tom: 'Used to milk b'hand in some of the cow'usses. Some of them were done up, I don't know when it was, for dairy regulations; put wood lofts, bauxes in them. Before that they were stick bauxes...had to take them out and put proper wood floors in, for hygiene I would think. They didn't want cobwebs dropping into the milk, like they used to' [laughs]. **Q: How many tied up in your cow'usses?** 'Four or five at most. Used to have about 13 at one time to go round...not milk all, you'd have two or three different ones to milk, rest were young stock, dry cows.'

'It could be five or six miles going round them all...twice a day. We just let them out once, some people let them out twice, to drink, but we only let ours once, except those that were milking, we let them out for more water. In '59, I think, we built a fresh cow'uss, outside, at home. We could tie 12 up then so that was a big improvement...all in one place...they were still tied up, yes, 'til we gave over milking, maybe twenty years since is it now? Building is now a shower and toilet block for the campsite.'

'Usually...just one went. He (Tom's father) would go one way and I'd go the other, like. That was it, unless he was away at auction or something then I would do them all. **Q: And the hay was stored alongside?** 'Yes each field was put into the barn in the field...all loose then.'

'I can remember, there was thunderstorm, and we were having tea in the kitchen and we see'ed, like a bolt of lightning come down, just up on Kisdon there. Then after, not very long after, see a plume of smoke going up. So we went up to see what had happened. It (the barn) had been struck. Then fire brigade came and knocked windows out, then...it went faster than ever! [laughs]...slates were exploding like...yeah, y'didn't go so near!'

'Sometimes the wind mebbe blew slates off, but they were put back on straight away. Once the wind gets in it can take a few off...the stock were warm when they were in, hay on top and at the end. Not a lot of ventilation but they kept warm...you were alright when you were in there, it was when you came out you were cold! When you let cows out to drink, if it was cold, bad weather, they weren't long before they were back in.'

Annas: 'The stories used to be if a young farm lad had had a rough night the night before, it was hard work getting up, but get up, go out into the warm (in the cow'uss), get his head into a cow, sat on a stool milking, and able to nod off again...just milking the cow, the warmth of the cow.'

(Adapted from the 1st November 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)