

## **Ernest Whitehead of Keld, formerly of Ravenseat & East Stonesdale farms.**

‘From Ravenseat...I would be 16, 17 something like...two uncles that farmed East Stonesdale, and I went to work for them because John m’older brother was at home, and m’ dad was, so that was enough for there so I went. East Stonesdale was a rather bigger farm, they had more sheep than Ravenseat so they’d need more of us there. Not many cattle, maybe 20 altogether, but this was different ages, they used to have 4 or 5 cows that we’d milk and then y’had younger ones, different ages coming on like. They were in the barn agin the house except in summer, when they were just in the pasture and we used to take them into a barn away from the house to milk ‘em twice a day. Small building in the fields, that was where you kept the young cattle; the young calves you used to keep at home, as soon as they were mebbe a year old, they’d go into some of the other barns...they used to almost go from barn to barn, as they got a bit older they moved to a rather bigger barn.’

‘They (cow’usses) were the same name, most of them were the same name as the field. Except one, that was up from the house, that was called Shot Lathe, and that was actually in a field called Long Town, but the building was called Shot Lathe...’lathe’ means a barn, but just where the ‘shot’ came from, I don’t know.’

‘Used to be two of us go, one’d go to so many and somebody would go to some of the others like. Sometimes you did those if you were going to the moor you’d do ‘em as you went toward moor go past ‘em, do ‘em and then go on to the moor like, to see to the sheep and like. Oh very labour-intensive, yes. If for any reason one of ye did them all, used to tek’ ye mebbe an hour and a half to go round them all. Twice a day. . . . always twice a day.’

**Q: Cows kept in longer over winter than summer?** ‘Oh yes, one of the reasons is that in April and May when you have all the sheep in the fields, in the pastures, for lambing time. You have to wait until they’ve got back to the moor, then a week or two for the grass to start to grow before you could turn the cattle out. Always toward the end of May like, before you’d get ‘em turned out, after 20<sup>th</sup> May before you’d get any of them turned out. They would go in

about beginning of November. They'd spent 6 month inside at least, maybe 7 month inside.'

'From East Stonesdale you could see a lot like, particularly haytime, you could see what everybody was doing . . . probably ten or twelve farms like, they were only little farms then, but you could see down nearly to Thwaite. You could see so far up towards the dale head. Depending on which fields you were in, one field you could see what they were doing up at West Stonesdale. Yes, you had a good view of what everybody's doing...this was very interesting, seeing what other folk were doing like, and that, thinking what you should do.'

'You could often see if there was a shower coming and then you knew you had to hurry, like, you only have ten minutes, quarter of an hour warning like and that. You could watch if clouds were building up, you knew if t'were a shower coming.'

'Yes, I was born at Ravenseat. . . . yes I enjoyed it like, cos there were five of us children, four at Campbell's, at the other house there. There was quite a lot of us like and there was actually quite a few of us were a similar age. . . . yes, aye, good times.'

'We used to have some hens and used to tek 'em up to one of yon pastures during summer and we had to go up and feed them of an afternoon, collect the eggs. And then, particularly lambing time we used to help, you know, cos at one time dad was on his own, he had a lot to do; we would only be, I don't know, 11, 12? But we used to help. Water some of the cattle at home...we used to just let them out into a little yard where there was a trough, with water in like. The only time I ever carried water was if it was frosty, if it got frozen like.'

'Haytime . . . it was all done by hand then, all you had was a mower for horses, nothing for actually stirring it, just used to have a horse rake for rowing it up, and then sweep of course. Yes, it was very labour-intensive, in the mew particularly you had to go round walls...pad it there, so you didn't let the air in, if the air got into it, it got a little bit, I'd say, foisty. We were always told to go round the wall side to make sure it was padded well round wall side...in the

middle probably it automatically dropped. Round the wall, it mebbe hung to the walls a bit... it isn't just a smooth wall, were rough walls, so therefore had to make sure and really push down. It was very hot, terrible like, t'was a lot of dust if t'hay was dry, lot of dust. Warm day, no wind. And I mean y' could be in there a few hours...someone bringing hay to you, and you could be a few hours there like....'

**Q: The good old days?** 'You look back on it with nostalgia, but if you really went back to it, I don't think. . . . . '

'Such as dad and all them, yes they got tractors, but it was only doing roughly similar to what a horse'd do, pull the machinery and things like that, but nowadays with balers and wrappers, it's totally different. Going back, if they grew as much grass then as they do now, then there's no way many a time they'd ever've got it dry...you very much used t'just cut what we would call a 'plat', depending on, if it wasn't a very big field probably that, a big field'd be cut up into three or four plats...and that was really what you could hope to be able to get into hay and get baled or led in, in one day like. And you'd very much, if you were doing it correctly, have some you'd mow one day and if the weather was really right on the third day you could bale it or put it into buildings whichever you did and so you always had some at different stages... you'd mow a third, then the next day, mow another third...they always thought that if you got, as I said, if you got up t'grass you're badly managing it, because you should always have some getting towards hay, so that if came a good day you could get it into hay.'

(Cow'usses) 'They'll stand for years, providing just kept weather-proof. If a slate or two comes off then the weather gets in...the actual walls themselves can stand for hundreds of years, cos a lot of them were built onto solid firm ground, you know, they used to pick their place to put them and that, they'd stand for years like.'

(Adapted from the 4th May 2016 interview transcriptions from the Every Barn Tells a Story project by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority)