

Horse Power

There wis an almighty clatter, I sprang up in me bed and lucked roond. Everything seemed to be in place. Then I teen anither sweep o' the whole room, puss must hiv knocked sumtheen ouwer in the lobby. I jist about leapt off me bed when the grandfather clock chimed, Ding, Ding sivin times. I wid hiv tae git up and dae the byres, fur am needin tae day a thresheen oh oats this morneen and hid ah taks time. So I scrambled oot oh me bed and climmered ower tae the wardrobe and gecked inside luckin fur me claes I teen aff me sark, long-johns and bed cep. I halled on me vest and shirt, got me wolley gansey and tweed troosers on. I unearthed me socks that aunty Lil had knitted tae me last Christmas oot oh the chest-o'-draars and pulled them on. I could smell the porridge fae the feet oh the stair and the aroma fae the kitcheen wis delicious and fair meed me mooth water. I wandered in tae the kitchen still half a sleep me mither hid the whole o' the kitchen table set oot fur wur breakfast, the cups and saucers and bowls fur wur porridge. Mighty Mithers porridge fur yur breakfast fair keeps yi warm on a cowld morneen. before I ate, I geed and gave me face a dyke way the face cloot tae wackin me sell up, I sat doon at the table. Mither dished up the porridge so hid wis coolin before the rest o' the family came through fur their breakfast. They came slowly wan by wan. Firstly Fither, then uncle Bob and aunty Lil and then me sister Margaret, , they all sat at the table and fither said grace afore we started tae ate wur breakfast. I glaepid mine so I could go oot and git things ready fur fither and Bob comin oot tae help. Hid wis gitin a fair heat in the kitchen asweel, I jist cudna stick the hate any longer so aff I geed and pat me rubber boots on and geed awa oot tae the byres.

Up the closs I geed, what a bonny, peaceful, winters morneen hid wis. The blackbirds wur singin in the trees. Deer Soond wis crisp clear blue and Auskerry wis prominent in the distance. The sky wis still dull but the sun wis jist beginin tae peepin ower the Mull Heed. Sum change fae that wind and rain we hid on Thursday night hid wis sumeen else. I geed roond tae the stable tae git Bessie wir Clydesdale horse oot and harness her tae the cart. I teen her roond tae the stack yard in front oh the hoose as we needed tae git the sheaves fur dayin the thresheen. Fither and Bob met me doon bye the barn way wur dog Mirk. This wis tae help me build the sheaves on the cart. They took Mirk wae them becis about a stack there wis alwis the odd rat and Mirk wis most fairful good at catchin them. Fither and Bob forked the sheaves up tae me as I built them on, wae got as many built on the cart as possible tae safe hivin tae tak twa trips. As Fither and Bob forked the sheaves Mirk sat sternly watchin and waitin fur the meerist twitch or sign o' a rat. All o' a sudden Mirk fled in tae the stack and there wis a crunch like the thraain o' a ducks neck. Mirk sat and scoffed the rat. Hid wis right fine tae git rid oh that dirty vermin fae a roond about ur steeden and no hiv them chowin jute sacks and oats tae pieces. That wis us noo we hid the cart loaded, so I teen Bessie roond tae the barn way the cart. Fither and Bob walked back roond tae giv me a hand tae unload the cart. Bessie geed intae the barn and stopped next tae the back oh the mill whar we forked all the sheaves of the cart tae ahint the chaffy box ready tae fork up on tae the shave board and intae the back oh the mill. Wance we got that by way, I took Bessie roond tae the stable unharnessed her fae the cart and lead her back in the stable. I combed and groomed her coat, scraped the dung fae ahint her feet, loaded hid ah on the borrow and gave her some hiy and oats. I nipped doon to the

middeen climmered up the plank and dumped the dung oot oh the borrow and geed back up tae the stable way the borrow.

As usual I went ower tae the sloosh oh the milldam and watched the ducks sweemin awiy happily oot in the middle oh the millpond, when I looked doon in the water I cud see twathrie eels and brandies sweemin aboot. I liked watchin the gabliks in the milldam. The wap tae release the sloosh needed tae be screwed up tae allow the mill wheel tae turn and mak the watter wheel o' the mill turn, so I screwed hid up. 'Squeek squeek' hid geed and finally the watter rushed fae underneath the sloosh. The mill leed began tae flood and fill up, so I fled back roond tae the barn in a clatter tae help Fither and Bob git the mill runnin. I jumped up on the chaffy box and climmered up on the sheave board, Bob pulled the leaver which tensioned the mill belt tae allow the mill tae run. Fither forked the sheaves up tae me, when I cut the strings o' them and fed thum intae the back oh the mill. Everytime a sheave geed through the mill it let off a loud brrroom noise and the stray and oats appeared oot o' the mill. Bob caught the oats in jute bags fae the grain shoot and made sure the mill wis runnin properly. It wis a tierin job endlessly forkin and feedin sheave efter sheave in tae the mill but efter an oor and a half we wur nearly done. The milldam wis jist aboot dry and we widna hiv hin very much power tae drive the mill if we hidna stopped. Wae'd hin a good morneens thresheen which should lest fur another week. Fither and me geed tae feed and clean oot the kye when Bob tied all the strae up in tae winleenss. He took a bunch o' strae, twisted each end and tied the ends tae gither tae giv a neat buch o' strae. I still didna hiv the nack that he did oh gittin a neat tidy winleen.

In the hoose Mither, Lil and Margaret wur cleanin up efter breakfast. Lil and Mither geed oot and collected thur eggs oot oh the owld widen henny hooses fur the van wis cumin fur them this efternoon way the cheese and butter they had made yesterday too. Wan by wan they collected the eggs oot oh the four owld widen henny hooses intae strae baskets and teen them back in tae the hoose fur washeen. Hid wis the job that me and Margaret despised the most washin the eggs but luckily fur me as I wis cleanin oot the byres the day. All the watter hid been used in the hoose. So Margaret hid tae nip oot tae the well in the gerdeen fur sum watter. She got the steel bucket and tied a rop tae hid, she lifted the o' the well up lowered the bucket in tae hid allowed hid tae fill up. She then hauled the bucket back oot oh the well wance hid wis full, shut the lid and heeded back in tae the hoose and wash the eggs. As she washed the eggs, Lil dried them and put them in sections ready to tae be boxed. Mither on the other-hand geed oot tae the milky hoose and got the salted pork oot of the barrel o' salted watter ready to roast fur wir dinner. She then placed the lid back on the barrel and teen the pork roast in tae the hoose. She placed hid in a tin she laggered hid in mustard tae season hid and stuck hid in the oven o' the stove tae cook fur dinner.

The fire wisna heat enough so she shuffled twathrie more peats on tae give sufficient heat fur the pork tae cook. Margaret and Lil hid feenneeshed washin the eggs and hid them all boxed. Lil started tae pare Golden Winder tatties when Margaret geed oot tae the gerdeen fur Kale, she washed the hid, chopped hid ah up and placed hid in a pan ready fur gan on the stove at half eleven. Mither though wis noo creamin butter and sugar ready to mix in floer and eggs fur steamed pudding me favourite.

Ootside we jst hid the middle byre tae clean, feed neeps tae the stots and heefers and git neeps fae the field before dinner. Fither pat the last o' the neeps in tae the cutter

and whapped round the wheel which turned the big round blade tae slice the neeps fur the baests as he turned the cutter hid wis slurp slurp as the juicy neeps wur cut up. He filled two wire baskets sharin wan basket atween the stots and another atween the heefers. I brushed all the sharn doon fae the stalls and the back o' the kyes feet and off the wak in tae the uddler. Yi hid tae watch ursel about the younger baests as sometimes they could gae a fair keek and giv yi a singer o' a sore leg. I shuveled all the sharn in tae the borrow and dumped hid in the mideen I wheeled the borrow back up tae the stable and parked hid aside Bessie.

By the time I hid the byres cleaned oot, Bob hid the last oh the strae gathered intae winleens and fither hid fed the last o' the kye fed. So I lousened Bessie and got her oot oh the stable and harnessed her back up tae the cart. Bessie lucked a bit dull and stiff like but she soon perked up wance we hid her harnessed tae the cart. We geed oot the road tae the Brecky Field whar the neeps wis, bit Bessie jist wisna her usual sell. I said to Fither, 'Whits is wrong wae wir Bessie' and he said 'am no sure but will need tae stop so I can hiv a luck at her'. Then all o' a sudden Bessie fell wae wan almighty clatter on tae the road. Bob and me seen her startin tae keel ower and we scarpered ower the side o the cart before hid tipped way is. By the time we got round tae her she wis gaeing her last keeks and there wis not desh thing iny o' is could dae tae help her she wis a goner. Fither said, 'beuy I think hid must hiv been her ticker whits packed up as it wis fairly sudden and queek'. 'Bessie she cant be deed' I kept sayin hid tae mesel. 'We've hin her fur the last tane years she cant be!'. Fither said I doot min she's gone and theres nothin any o' is can do about hid. Bob said the only thing that we can do is git her of the raod ready tae be burried the morn. So we geed doon the road tae wur neebour John Taylor fae Sandesquoy tae ask him if he wid cum way his gelding tae help is pull her off the road. John very kindly came up with his gelding pulled Bessie aff the road and intae the Manse park whar she wis gan tae be burried the morn.

The next day, wae were all still shocked at Bessie's passing, but we had tae pull wursels tae gither and day a days wark. So Bob agreed tae stiy at home and do the byres while fither and me dug the grave fur wur Bessie. It took us two oors tae dig the grave because the grund wis that stoney, but finally we got hid finished. As we dug the grave I reflected back on all the good times I hid way Bessie. I still mind the day she wis born, hid wis a cowld winters morneen in December, I geed oot tae the stable in morneen and there she wis lyin on the floor still weet after Jimima her mither hid foaled her durin the nite. I also mind the wiy she used tae snort at yi if yi didna pet and groom her after gayin her hiy, she really wis a freck o' dirt. She wis a tremendous horse, there wis hardly a job that she cudna dae fae plooin tae cartin in sheaves. Yas she wisna only a horse bit she wis also me freend, I doot she'll be sadly missed by is all. John came up fae Sandesquoy way his gelding wance we feeneshed digin and pulled wur Bessie intae her grave. The whole family came oot and said their last good byes. I fund it hard when way shuvled earth ower her body, I felt a tear fall doon me cheek, I wid nevere see her again 'me poor Bessie'. Fither turned tae me when we hid the grave filled in. He said 'weel beuy, I think will hiv tae move way the times and purchase wursel a tractor'. 'Will no need tae muck the tractor oot, feed it or groom it!'.