



THE CLYDESDALE HORSE

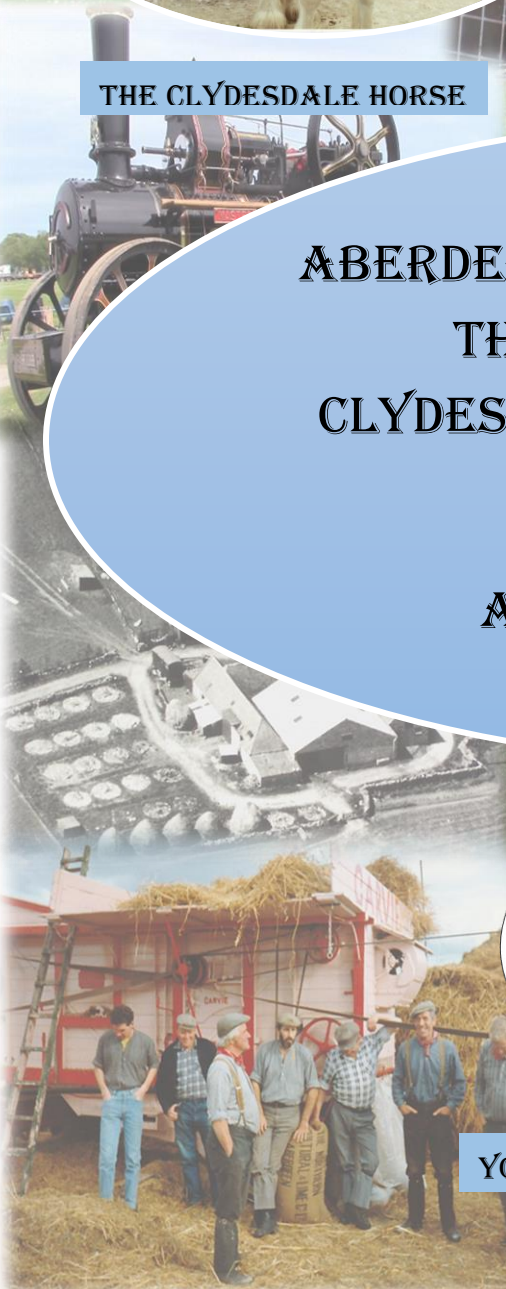


THE LITTLE GREY FERGIE

ABERDEENSHIRE FARMING LIFE DURING
THE TRANSITION FROM THE
CLYDESDALE HORSE TO THE TRACTOR
BY DR DON CARNEY
A PREVIEW OF THE BOOK



YOUNG AUTHOR ENJOYING STOOKING 1998



CONTENTS.

Aims of the book

Chapter summaries

Chapter one. Introduction to the time period of study pre--(1940s -1966)

Chapter two. The era of horsepower for two hundred years.

Chapter three. The winter work routine.

Chapter four. Ploughing and planting.

Chapter five. The hay time.

Chapter six. The hairst.

Chapter seven. Takin in the nowt.

Chapter eight. Social interaction.

Chapter nine. The farm calendar, and the implements used.

Chapter ten. Our heritage expressed via our language.

Chapter eleven. Social anthropological analyses & impact of these vital years for farming.

Chapter twelve. Postscript.

There are 280 illustrations within the book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don was born at Hillhead farm Lyne of Skene in Aberdeenshire and moved to the neighbouring farm called Drumnaheath when he was 2 years old. This was when his parents took over the farm from his Grandfather Frank. The rural life on a family farm required all members of the family to work. This constant work routine did not appeal to Don as a career and after leaving school he served his time as a chef. Later he was in hospitality management and he ended his career in at The Robert Gordon University where he was a Management lecturer.

His pride in his ancestors was something which he recognised early in his life and this book and his filming of over 500 hours of the heritage of the North East of Scotland has been his passion since 1989. His archive of film was awarded The Best Scottish Heritage Media Archive 2020 and his films have been distributed worldwide. He is a fluent Doric speaker and his filming, and this book reflects that.

Don has entertained people as a guitar, keyboard, accordion player, comedian, singer and magician for over 50 years. He is married to Dot and has three children Clare, Lesa and Jenny. He also has two grandchildren Eva and George

AIMS OF THE BOOK

This book, featuring a mix of English and the Doric which is the dialect of the North East of Scotland, was first drafted in 1990 and lay untouched till 2020 when I rediscovered it on my computer. During the Corona 19 pandemic worldwide I decided that the time was right to try to get the book finished. This was done in August 2020.

1. Is to capture the past, which broke with two hundred years of traditional rural farming techniques. It is seen through the eyes of a farmer's son, i.e. me, and relates to how these techniques and rural interaction developed within these years. I record how things were before the great change happened, and then what the changes were and what influences they brought to bare.

2. In writing this book it was my aim to record the transition from horsepower and labour intensive farming techniques, to the introduction of tractor power and capital-intensive farming techniques, as applied to farming in Aberdeenshire.

3. The old ways of labour intensive techniques are features of rural heritage which need to be recorded. Memory is a poor custodian of the facts. The facts of that time are only recorded in the minds of those who experienced how it was before the ravages of intensive industrialisation took over. If this information is not permanently recorded then the past will die with these elderly people, and to my mind that would be a terrible shame.

4. I have found myself in an ideal position to record the facts because of my family farming background and my early socialisation processes as a farmer's son. I have experienced three generations of farming on the farm where I was brought up. This has shown me how the techniques of tradition, which my grandfather inherited from his forebears, have had to be modified to cope with the contemporary change mechanisms. These change mechanisms were faced by my father. I have therefore tried to capture the pressures of changes plus the actual changes.

5. The period of study is of vital importance as a transition from one mode of production and its way of life to another completely different, with its different lifestyle. I have also validated my input with reference given by several older members of the farming community, around my area. Further validation of events has been made by referring to my mother's diaries, which she kept in daily detail, all her life, and still does.

6. I also wished to record how the rural district was united in a common bond. What held the rural community together and how common interests acted as a social factor for integration. When change happened, the community paid a high price, perhaps too high.

7. All aspects of a by-gone era of agricultural activity are therefore recorded. Heritage is also found in the rich North East dialect and I have included a chapter on this.

8. I wished to try to analyse, with the benefit of hindsight, why things happened and what were the results. This is contained in a chapter on social anthropological analysis.

9. The family life during this time is also recorded. Although the family life recorded is based

on my own experiences, this in no way distorts how other families in this area lived their lives. We were all the same because there was nothing different for families to do. Therefore, the account is representative of this area.

The following is a synopsis of the chapters.

CHAPTER 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TIME PERIOD UNDER STUDY. (1949-1966).

This is an introduction to the time period, and the nature of the type of rural environment under study. I show the reader why this is a vital time period. Here I outline the commonalities of the district. One such commonality was the small country school. The starting time scale of this study was before the advent of electricity; hence entertainment was home made.

I clearly identify the Farm and its location in Aberdeenshire so that a clear indication of when and where the book relates to is given.

CHAPTER 2. THE ERA OF CLYDESDALE HORSEPOWER, FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS.

This is a very vital record of how farming took place when horsepower was the only source of agricultural power. I describe how to break in a horse, how a horse was treated, how they did their work, a typical horseman's working day, the trips to the smiddy, the farmers "Gig" horse, All the above are described as operational procedures. This chapter provides an accurate account of how a good pair o horse was of vital importance to the prosperity of the farm. I highlight the close links that the horsemen had with this gentle giant the Clydesdale. I feature the mystery of the Horseman's Grippin Word.

CHAPTER 3. THE WINTER WORK ROUTINE.

This records the work which took place on a typical mixed arable farm before the advent of mechanisation and intensive techniques. Topics include e.g., yokin time, the milking, deing the byre, hashing neeps with the plump hasher, deep litter hens, pooing neeps, caing neeps, takin in hay, threshing, winnieing corn, gaing t the toon, ditching and draining. I have tried to use the North East dialect to describe tasks and implements. The work which had to be done by the whole family was done by us all in a very cooperative none grudging way. That "wis aa wi kint" and we were happy doing it.

CHAPTER 4. PLOUGHING AND PLANTING.

This chapter describes the horse technique of ploughing. Crop rotation is explained, weed gathering and the general methods of preparation of the soil for planting. I go on to describe

how all the crops are planted and cared for. This chapter recalls the latter-day skills of the farm servant. I also highlight how he considered himself an expert and how pride in the JOB was essential to him. He was a highly skilled person.

CHAPTER 5. THE HAY TIME.

In this chapter I describe how this major farming task was carried out, from e.g. the cutting stage through to the rucking stage. Again, I capture the essence of that procedures. I also outline technological changes affecting the hay time activities. I recall the long summer days of fun as well as work, which always came first.

CHAPTER 6. THE HAIRST.

This labour intensive task is worthy of recording since many farming hours was spent on this job. I describe all the skilled jobs which take place e.g. building the carts, and the rucks. How any visitors joined in with the hairst. In this chapter I also highlight caaing muck, from the midden on to the cut stubble ground. The importance of a well-stocked corn yard was essential if the stock numbers were to be maintained. There was not enough money at that time to buy feed. The only option open to the farmer if he had a bad hairst was to sell stock. This was very difficult for him to do, how he could then find the cash again to replace them. The hairst in actual fact had the true meaning of supplying the seed corn in more ways than one.

CHAPTER 7. TAKIN IN THE NOWT.

Here I look at the programme of work which was involved in looking after the cattle all winter. I recognise the relationships which develop between man and his beasts. How we coped when the cattle went off to market to be sold, how we welcomed new additions to our stock. The process of birth is evaluated. The constant need to supply the nowt with feed is highlighted using labour intensive techniques. I point out the new season which was welcomed when the nowt went out to grass in the spring. It was a relief to them and also to us. This chapter huds on t the past by detailing all aspects of stock husbandry.

CHAPTER 8. SOCIAL INTERACTION.

In this chapter I concentrate on what and how the social interactions took place between neighbours before the motor car was used. I try to define social values, I analyse the role that the local school played in the community. I describe a typical winters night routine after all the work was done. This routine was one which did not rely on readymade entertainment, it featured self-made entertainment. This is something which is worthy of remembering. I also outline summer activities of all sorts, from making a whistle out of a Rowan tree cutting, to the type of games we kids played.

CHAPTER 9. THE FARMING CALENDAR, AND THE IMPLEMENTS USED.

Here I chart the events of the farming calendar and discuss in detail the type of implements used on the farm. The dates of different tasks on the farm follow a very strict pattern year in year out. On the second week in May the neeps had to be in, for example. I pay tribute to the local designer of equipment and show how his ancient designs are still applied today. Without the technology of today, man was indeed a creator extraordinaire.

CHAPTER 10 THE NORTH EAST DIALECT.

This vital record of our dialect inherited from our parents via their parents is something which must be remembered. I try to capture the richness of the Doric word and provide the reader with an interpretation of the words used. I include a short typical North East conversation during a visit of the neighbour. I also encourage its use and encourage people of this area to apply "When in Rome do as the Romans do" The nonagricultural worker who now populates the area should help to keep the language alive. I mention the fact that schools are now beginning to see the richness, "of oor y o spikin". the "Doric" language perhaps will survive us all.!

CHAPTER 11. SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THESE VITAL YEARS.

As an academic as well as a Teuchter, (or should I get my priorities right, as a Teuchter and an academic) I have tried to critically appraise the most significant influences of change which these years saw. I reflect on the state of the economy at that particular time and look at the economic factors of supply and demand which began to influence the speed of the industrial revolution. I also look at the depopulation of the rural area and the subsequent re population. I look at the impact of electricity, and how man's expectations are affected by his external influences. Diet is also looked at just to see what effect the then and now diet had on people. Plus, many more aspects of life.

The past is analysed in an academic way, with as always, the benefit of hindsight. I offer no hard and fast conclusions but try to cover both sides of the equation. The reader can make up thier own mind about how I have looked at each of the crucial influences which I consider important. Things are never as easy as they perhaps look. This feature of social understanding is one clear conclusion in this chapter.

CHAPTER 12. POSTSCRIPT.

Here I bring the reader up to date re the history of Drumnaheath farm. What happened to it from 1966- 1989. Then updated till 2013

ILLUSTRATIONS.

A feature of this book is the 280 photos which have been placed within the chapters which try to capture the essence of a past way of life. All photographs are taken by me, in the live setting, not as set museum pieces but mostly featuring the actual scene or activity. This will illustrate to the reader the topic in question, and will further enhance the package, as a historical record of our past rural and agricultural heritage. In this section the photos are listed featuring their caption.