

A Goat's Blog



As transcribed by Henry Haslam

A Goat's Blog

As transcribed by Henry Haslam

© Henry W Haslam

Contents

The Story	1
The Poem	2
The Blog	4

THE STORY

One Christmas, I received a surprise present of a goat, from an alternative gift catalogue. I was a bit confused at first (THE POEM).

The next Christmas I received another surprise present, another goat. It turned out that this goat had rather a lot to say for itself, mostly on the church website, www.standrewstaunton.org.uk/Henry_Goat_homepage.htm (THE BLOG).

My thanks go to Sarah and Dave, who started the whole thing off by giving me the first goat; to Adrian, Webmaster of St Andrew's church, Taunton, for his encouragement; and to Adrian, Ali, Carol, Gill, Katharine, Kevin, Martin, Steve, Stuart and Sue, who gave me such an interesting goat – the goat with the gab.

Henry Haslam
Taunton
September 2007

THE POEM

A Gift of a Goat

Dear Sarah and Dave, thank you ever so much:
A gift that's alive, and so soft to the touch.
A gift of a goat: what a lovely surprise!
(I'm glad that you told me before it arrives.)
A gift of a goat – and it's coming today?!
It's hungry, I'm sure, so I'll lay in some hay.
I'll sweep the top room for this heart-warming gift;
It's nimble on stairs, so it won't need a lift.

I'll take it for walks every evening and morn,
To seek out the tastiest bramble and thorn.
We'll learn where to find the most succulent thistle.
I'll teach it to canter to me when I whistle.
I'm so looking forward to meeting my goat.
It's wintertime now, so I'll make it a coat.
I don't go to work; I could do with a pet,
And a goat with a coat is the finest pet yet.

But steady... read further... look carefully and see...
This glorious goat is not coming to me.
The card makes it plain that it's not mine at all:
It's helping a family in... Laos or Nepal.
It's part of a scheme to help people in need,
To raise living standards by sowing the seed,
To give folk a start; after that, so we reckon,
Prosperity, health and nutrition will beckon.

My goat doesn't know, but its message is clear:
The message of Christmas, the message of cheer.
The gift of a goat tells of peace and goodwill,
From Chile to China, from Chad to Brazil,
Encircling the planet again and again –
Mongolia... Malawi... Jamaica... Ukraine –
The message of Christmas, of God come to earth,
The message of Christmas, the news of new birth.

Sometimes I shall think of that glamorous goat,
The goat of my dreams, the goat with a coat,
The gift I won't see, the best present I've had.
My thanks to you both, and with lots of love,
Dad

THE BLOG

18 December 2006

Imagine a goat in a shop – and that's me!
Just waiting and waiting; I want to be free!
I'm young, and I wonder what life has in store:
Adventures and travels and feasting and more.
I'm bored. But what's this? What is happening today?
I'm put in a bag to be taken away!

19 December

When they let me go free, what a sight to behold!
There were so many people: eleven all told.
However, I thought they looked friendly enough,
And the table was laden with lots of good stuff.

Then packed up again – to be taken to where?
It's the tall one who took me, the one with grey hair.
He settled me in here, but to my dismay
I discovered, too late, he'd forgotten my hay.
He promised so much, in that poem he wrote,
But a poem's no use to a ravenous goat.

He swept the top room for me? No he did not!
He doesn't like working (I'm learning a lot!).
He'll teach me to canter? He'll find me some thistle?
Maybe he will – when he's learnt how to whistle.

He was walking on Exmoor today, and that's when
I wrote all this blog, putting paper to pen.
He left me behind, and it makes me so cross
To think of him striding o'er bracken and moss.
He should take me with him; I don't mind the weather;
I'd really enjoy all the woods, and the heather.
I'd keep right ahead of him, honest I would;
I'd run-run-run-run just as fast as I could.

22 December

Now answer me truly: which one of you talked?
I know someone told him, 'cos in he just walked
And told me he'd heard of my blog that I wrote.
He says that he thinks I'm an ungrateful goat.
Perhaps I was tetchy, like goats often get
When they move somewhere new – any goat gets upset.

I'm chirpier now. There's a puppy-dog here;
A white rabbit too, all the way from Ikea.
I'm taking them with me when we go away.
(We're going to Wiltshire for Christmas, to stay
In a house, so he tells me, that's all full of noise
And children and clergy and lots of nice toys.)

5 January 2007

These grey winter days – how they give me the blues!
It's the time of the year I could use a good cruise.
I can see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Boat'.
(He's just interrupted, with 'Does a goat float?'
I think I'll ignore him.) So come with me, please,
To Cuba, Barbados and Florida Keys.

The puppy will help me – and so will the rabbit –
To sail through the oceans: it's such a good habit.
(I wish he'd keep quiet.) So come with me, do,
To Fiji, Hawaii and Vanuatu.

I do hope you'll join me, to sail in my boat.
I ask who I like, because I'm Captain Goat.
(We'll leave him behind, don't you think?) Let us leave
For Tripoli, Venice, Beirut, Tel Aviv.

So pack up your bags, and lock up the house.
(I think I'll relent. If he's quiet as a mouse
We'll let him come with us.) Then welcome afloat
As you cruise round the world on a boat with a goat!

18 January

He's walking the Quantocks this fine afternoon.
He'll come back again – but I hope not too soon:
It's when he goes walking (he won't take a dog)
It means I can start the next bit of my blog.
I write when he's walking or goes for a drive –
I penned the last piece on the M25.
The rest of the time he's just talking with friends
Or writing or something: it just never ends:
Philosophy, church, and now politics too;
He keeps us quite busy, spare moments are few;
And then, if you please, in between every session
He's helping a friend with a book on depression.

Enough about him. It's not his blog, you see.
It's my blog, for me, so let's talk about me.
The puppy is lovely; I'm glad that he's here;
The white rabbit too, all the way from Ikea;
But puppy and rabbit don't rhyme with a goat.
I think what I want is a good-tempered stoat.
I've tried, but I haven't located one yet
D'you think I could find one by surfing the net?
I can see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Stoat',
But first I must find one – a stoat for a goat;
And then, when we've clambered aboard in my boat,
I'll float out to sea in a boat with a stoat.

21 January

We climbed in the car and we drove up and down
And spent the weekend near to Basingstoke town.
The house that we stayed in had teddies galore,
Some penguins, a dolphin, a duckling – and more:
A parrot, a badger, a bear with no hair;
A monkey that clings to the back of the chair;
An owl that's called Hedwig; a hog and a dog;
A lion; an elephant chasing a frog;
A snowman, a santa, a panther that's pink;
A big bear and small bear who live in the sink;
A squeaky banana, a funny old bunny;
A doll and a scarecrow to eat up the honey;
A snake, a racoon and a clown with a frown;
All these in the house near to Basingstoke town.

22 January

He told me it couldn't be done, but I did it!!
I've written a poem with Basingstoke in it!
I do hope you thought that my poem was nice.
It's clever, with Basingstoke coming in twice.

3 February

This place is too small, just a miniscule flat.
You can't run around, and you can't swing a cat.
A goat needs some acres, where thistles abound;
A goat needs a castle, with water around;
I can see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Moat'.
I'll sail on the moat in a boat with a stoat.
I'm sure that I must be the first ever goat
To float in a boat with a stoat on a moat.

To talk of the Henge and its Stones with the clown.

11 February

We travel again towards Basingstoke town
To see the racoon and the clown with a frown;
But first I have something important to say
Concerning the Stones that we pass on the way.
They call them a Henge. They're a fine sight to see,
While passing them by on the A303.
The bluestones were dragged from Preseli, in Wales.
And how did they drag them? I've heard some fine tales,
But now I can tell you the truth of the matter;
For this, I assure you, is no idle chatter.

So, how did the stones get to Salisbury Plain?
It was hundreds of goats. It was goats took the strain.
The Welsh Mountain Goat is as strong as an ox,
Well able to manage the heaviest blocks.
The secret of dragging, as any goat knows,
Is 'Wait for the winter; then wait till it snows.'
Put runners beneath, and then hitch up your team;
Get ready! You're off! And it glides like a dream.

My ancestors did it, so now you know why
I so like to look at the stones, going by.
I hope they don't bury the road underground,
Depriving us all of the view we have found.
A bypass to north or to south, if you must,
For drivers determined to travel so fast,
But please leave a lane where the good 303
Gives views of the Stones for a dawdler like me.

We'll wave at the Henge as we're motoring past;
We'll wave at the Henge, and we won't drive too fast.
We'll wave as we drive towards Basingstoke town

12 February

I'm down with this bug that's been going around.
I'm weak and I'm sore, and I can't make a sound.
He says I've caught flu, but I cannot agree –
The way that I look at it, flu has caught me.
I don't eat my food, and that must be bad.
I'm staying indoors feeling terribly sad.
You never have seen such a sorrowful goat;
I see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Throat'.

17 February

I've told him I want to be given a name;
I've wanted a name since the day that I came.
Without your own name you don't know who you are;
You might be horse, or you might be a car.

I hardly can bear it: imagine the shame
To be known all your life as 'The Goat with no Name'.
But not for much longer. He knows that I'll pine
For a name, and he'll give me a name that is mine.

I'm getting a name, and I've just had this thought –
I'll give the same name to the boat that I bought.
A boat needs a name when it sails on the sea,
And it's right that my boat should be named after me.

So now it's all settled. We know what we'll do,
For I know, and he knows, and so do you, too:
He'll give me a name that's a name for a goat,
And I'll pass it on as the name for a boat.

27 February

Today is my day! I've been given a name!
When you have your own name, life is never the same!
I have my own name now, and so has my boat.
Shall I say what he called me? He called me 'That Goat'!

I'll say how I know. I had gone out to try
My boat on the moat; and I can't tell you why
But he wanted to find me. He said to my stoat –
I heard him distinctly – 'Oh where is That Goat?'

So that's how I learnt of the name that is mine.
And all of today I was high on cloud nine.
Tomorrow, with paint, we shall name my good boat.
Perhaps it's the first ever boat called 'That Goat'.

3 March

He's put his name forward, he told me today,
To stand in the council elections in May.
I'll study his papers with care – the whole lot,
To see if I like what he stands for or not.
I'll read all the others as well, just to see
Which candidates really will work best for me.
I can see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Vote';
Together we'll settle it, me and my stoat.

12 March

Well really! The things that he asks me to do!
I don't think it's right to go thieving, do you?
He wants me to steal him some apricot jam:
What kind of a goat does he think that I am?
If he's run out of jam, let him get out his money;
If he's run out of money – well, let him eat honey!

[I totally repudiate this outrageous accusation. What has the
goat been eating? HWH]

22 March

Calamity! Help! I don't know what to do!
I'm here in my boat (and the sky is so blue),
But now it is leaking. I'm starting to think...
I think – no, I'm certain – it's going to sink!
It's filling with water right up to the brim!
Calamity! Help! I don't know how to swim!
We're sinking – my boat is about to capsize!
And I'm in the water right up to my eyes!
Calamity! Help! I don't know what to do...
My boat has gone down... (and the sky is so blue.)

28 March

It's Spring! It's my favourite time of the year!
The time of the year it's so good to be here!
The sun's getting stronger, the colours are bright;
The clocks have gone forward, the evenings are light;
The grass is a-growing, the hedges are green;
Wherever I look there is food to be seen!

2 April

Of course I'm still blogging; but why do you ask?
I don't understand why you take me to task?
You tell me you thought I was all out at sea?
You wanted to know what had happened to me?
You want to know how I survived from the wave?
The prospect so bleak, and the outlook so grave?
I'll tell, if you like, but it won't be today.
I need to think out what I'm going to say.
You must understand I need time to review
The events that day, when the sky was so blue.

9 April

So here is the story you want me to tell.
You asked for a blog about all that befell
That day when I just did not know what to do;
The one thing I knew was the sky was so blue.

I was terribly scared when my boat sprung a leak,
As you can imagine: whose help could I seek?
I must have passed out. When I later came to,
I was lying in bed, and around me – guess who?
The stoat and the puppy dog sitting right here;
The white rabbit too, all the way from Ikea.
I looked, and I saw there were teddies galore,
The penguins, the dolphin, the duckling – and more:
The parrot, the badger, the bear with no hair;
The monkey, who'd leapt from the back of the chair;
The owl that's called Hedwig; the hog and the dog;
The lion; the elephant chasing the frog;
The snowman, the santa, the panther that's pink;
The big bear and small bear, who'd climbed from the sink;
The squeaky banana, the funny old bunny;
The doll and the scarecrow, who'd finished the honey;
The snake, the racoon and the clown, all in brown,
His face wreathed in smiles – with no hint of a frown.

Such friends! I had panicked, of course, and I thought
I was all on my own in the boat I had bought,
Forgetting that so many friends were nearby.
They saw me in trouble. They all heard me cry.
What a blessing for me there was help close at hand.
They soon got me out; I was safe on dry land.
They rescued my craft from the depths of the moat,
And painted it freshly – a gleaming 'That Goat'.

So that is the story – and all of it true –
Of when my boat sank (and the sky was so blue).

9 May

I'm writing in a different metre now,
To make a change, to learn a different art.
For that's the way to greatness, so he says,
The road to fame and fortune, wealth and power.
It's time to test my mind, to learn new skills,
To follow where the greatest poets led
And forge the way where never goat has trod.
I'm writing here in lines like Shakespeare used;
He never wrote a blog, but in his plays
He used to write in verse that scans like this.
(It's very easy, really, as you see,
Especially as it doesn't have to rhyme –
Though, just for you, I'll make it rhyme this time.)

Iambic pentameters, that's what they're called;
I can't say they grab me, or hold me enthralled.
They're not as adaptable, that's what I say;
There are so many thoughts that they cannot convey:
'Iambic pentameter' won't fit their metre,
And as for 'Shakespearean poetry reader',
There isn't a hope of you fitting it in,
E'en Shakespeare himself would be all in a spin,
Unable to make the lines scan as they ought,
He'd have to give in; it would make him distraught!

I hope that by now you have all understood:
Iambic pentameters aren't any good!
It's best I should stick with the metre I know,
Its comforting, steady and rhythmical flow.

24 May

I pick up some paper... I write something on it...
The next thing I know is I've written a sonnet:

I wandered off, upon a summer's day.
My object was to go in search of food.
I left the town, and then, not far away,
My wand'rings brought me to a shady wood.
The branches of the trees were all too high,
And so, alas, there was no food in reach;
And dark it was: I longed to see the sky,
So off I walked, though pine and oak and beech.
I left the wood, and nearby found a field;
(The sun was shining there), and round it grew
Some shrubs and thorns – and then I saw, revealed,
My favourite food, some gorse, and thistles too.
I ate and ate, till I could eat no more;
Then sauntered home, to rest upon the floor.

25 May

I know that I said (and you all understood),
'Iambic pentameters aren't any good'.
It's not really true. If you stop and think on it,
You can't do without them for writing a sonnet.
They're really quite useful, some poets would say.
Perhaps I was hasty. Perhaps they're OK.

8 June

I read the best poets; I know them all well
(It's poetry reading that taught me to spell).
There's Wordsworth and Shelley and Shakespeare and Lear;
There's Kipling and Browning – I've got them all here;
There's Tennyson, Chesterton, Betjeman, Donne;
And then there's that versatile poet, Anon;
Macaulay, O'Shaughnessy, Milton and Pope;
MacCaig – and then Coleridge, Carroll and Cope.
There's poets galore if you know how to look:
There's Keats and there's Yeats and there's Wilde and there's
 Brooke;
I'll read any poem; I need no excuse
To open a volume by Nash or by Sues.
I know, off by heart, the best lines that they wrote:
I'm widely renowned as 'The Goat with a Quote'.

13 June

He wants me to put in a plug for his book
To get all you readers to have a good look.
I don't really want to. I've put up a fight,
But, since he insists, I shall tell you the site.
You switch your computer on first; get it set,
And then you can find it by searching the ...
 www.moralmind.co.uk.
You see what I mean? How it upsets the rhyme?
It upsets the metre as well, every time.

The website describes what his book has to say
And quotes the reviews – and they think it's OK.
The book's about people, philosophy too,
And then evolution. There's nothing for you –
It's terribly boring, the stuff that he wrote.
He isn't a poet like me; he's no goat.
He writes all in prose; there's no rhyme I can see,
Except for the footnote on page 83.

20 June

It's the time of the year when we head for the moors;
Ascending the hillsides, all marching in fours.
It's Midsummer's Eve, and the Chorus of Goats
Are leaving the plains, with their farms and their moats,
To gather together, assembled in flocks,
On summits and peaks, on crags and on rocks.
The crowds come to listen, so eager to hear
The Chorus of Goats sing in concert, each year.
We sing from the hilltops, we sing from the heart,
We sing to the dawn. When we're ready to start
I give them a C from the depths of my throat.
(They all of them know I'm 'The Goat with the Note'.)

You never have heard such a magical sound:
The Chorus of Goats singing out all around.
Just hark at the harmony, filling the air
With music so joyful, with melody fair.
The climax is when, just before we all leave,
That Goat sings a solo, a recitative.
It's time, after that, for us all to depart;
We send you away with a song in your heart.
The Chorus of Goats have delighted your ear
With music to hold for the rest of the year.

29 June

It's never too early to plan your display,
As carnival time edges closer each day.
I can see myself now, as 'The Goat with a Float';
The crowds will all wave at the float with the goat!
I'm a seafaring goat, so I know what I need
(As well as a strong and reliable steed):
I must have a float I can take on the moat;
My stoat, only yesterday, said (and I quote),
'We must have a watertight float that will float!'
Most steadfast of stoats! He was right that our float
Must float like a boat with a goat on the moat.
(Now aren't I a clever poetical goat!)

15 July

You all know that poem of his, where he wrote,
'It's wintertime now, so I'll make it a coat'
Well, winter it was when I came to his flat,
And cold it was too, and I didn't like that;
But never a sign of a coat did I see
Till Sunday (today) at a quarter to three.
It's summertime now, and I'm rather dismayed
To find that I'm given this coat he has made.
He found an old shirt and he cut it in two.
(Believe me – it's true. What a dumb thing to do!)
I must have been dreaming, not keeping alert,
And now I'm wrapped up in a half of a shirt.
The sleeves are so long that I can't move around.
I'll just have to sit here until I am found.

I'll wait until one of you comes to the flat
And you can release me. I'll thank you for that.
It gives me no pleasure to say to my stoat
That now, only now, I'm 'The Goat with a Coat'.

6 July

There's coat and there's boat and there's moat and there's note –
But who can be all of them? Why! It's That Goat!

*I'm a goat of many colours, I'm a goat to sail the sea;
I'm the goat around the castle, I'm the goat of middle C!*

*I'm a goat to keep invaders out, on that you must agree;
I'm a goat to keep you warm: a multipurpose goat – that's me!*

5 August

A Gift from a Goat

I've something to tell you, I've news to convey:
I'm writing this blog, then I'm going away.
My days here are over. I'm leaving tonight,
And this is the last ever blog I shall write.
So why am I leaving? And where shall I go?
The future is hazy, but one thing I know:
It's time to move on; I must follow my star
Wherever it leads – and it may lead me far.

I'm starting in Europe, the sights for to see.
I'll do the Grand Tour. I'll be having a spree!
I'll see all the cities, like Paris and Rome;
Then head for the hills, where a goat feels at home.
A goat, in his youth, should the Matterhorn climb,
To stand on the top of that summit sublime.
The Eiger, as well, is a peak to ascend;
You start from the north, and you go with a friend.
I'll walk through the pastures and meet all the goats;
We'll talk about puppies and rabbits and stoats.
Then one final visit, as destiny calls:
He wants me to go to the Reichenbach Falls.

I won't finish there. I've a long way to go;
I'm searching the world for a goat I don't know –
The goat that was his, but was not his at all,
The goat that's in Laos, or perhaps in Nepal,
Or perhaps somewhere else, for I really don't know,
But one day I'll find him, in sun or in snow.

And when I have found him, in snow or in sun,
I'll stop, for I'll know that my journey is done.
And then we shall talk: we shall talk of the past,
Of how I went searching, and found him at last;
We'll talk of the moat, and my friends left behind;
We'll talk of the future, and what we shall find.

We'll talk and we'll rest. At the turn of the year,
As Christmas comes round, in that season of cheer,
The greeting of old will remain the same still,
The message to everyone, 'Peace and goodwill'.
And then we shall know it is time we should start
On the work that is ours; we shall each play our part.

Our task is to seek out each piece of goodwill,
To plant it, to grow it, to nurture it, till
There's more than enough for the whole of the earth;
We'll mix it and stir it with mountains of mirth;
We'll give it away, and with plenty to spare;
Just look, and you'll see there's goodwill in the air –
There's lots of goodwill, and there's merriment too,
A gift from a goat, it is my gift to you.