

Take a Breather with Walter de la Mare in our Poetry Corner

FIVE EYES

Walter de la Mare

In Hans' old mill his three black cats
Watch his bins for the thieving rats
Whisker & claw they crouch in the night
Their five eyes smouldering green & bright;
Squeaks from the flour sacks, squeaks from where
The cold wind stirs on the empty stair,
Squeaking & scampering, everywhere.
Then down they pounce, now in, now out
At whisking tail and sniffing snout;

While lean old Hans he snores away
Till peep of light at break of day;
Then up he climbs to his creaking mill,
Outcome his cats all grey with meal -
Jekkel, & Jessup & one-eyed Jill.

Bill 'The Bagger' Allford wrote this poem out for me when we were the weighing and bagging team at Longbridge Mill, Sherfield on Loddon. We used to sing it together whilst enduring slack moments and Bill would hop a little jig on the spot too. Sweet memories are made of this as Bill passed away a couple of years ago. I wonder what other mills' team members get up to in their mills when an idle moment occurs, waiting for another sack of flour to weigh, or the water level to come up ready for milling. Does anybody whistle? No, I won't come running - but you do know how to whistle, don't you?