

## The True Story of Grandad, Uncle Hughie and the Tractor

This is the story that dad told us one night last winter after he and mum had finished a bottle of Koppamurra (each). It all happened, said Dad, when grandad and gran had the farm in Tassie and Uncle Hughie was a bit older than you are now and I was just a little tacker.

Grandad and Hughie went out one day with the tractor and a load of posts in the paddock ute to mend the boundary fence. Hughie was old enough to drive the ute but not outside the gate and anyway it was the paddock ute and not the good one and anyway if you think I'm going to let you drive our ute after we had to pull it out of the creek you've got another think coming, so just let me get on with the story, said dad (I thought that was a bit unnecessary, really).

So off they went and took their dinner with them but half way through the afternoon gran remembered that they were supposed to go to town to talk to the bank so she'd have to go and find grandad and drive into town. (My sister who has no brains said why didn't she ring him on his mobile).

Gran put dad into the good ute and drove off to find them. But when she did there was a whole business of what about Hughie and how to get the tractor and the paddock ute back to the house and what time would they get back from town and anyway it would be dark by then and what about Hughie out here on his own?

Finally grandad says no it's all quite easy and stop all this silly fuss. Hughie will set up the tractor on the track, get it going nice and slowly and follow in the ute; it'll guide itself along the track and if it wanders off he can run after it. – You can manage that, can't you, son? Says grandad.

So grandad and gran and dad drive off to town in the good ute with gran looking back out the window at Hughie who is standing there next to the tractor and the old ute at the bottom of the paddock, waving goodbye.

We didn't see your uncle Hughie for quite a while after that, said dad, in fact not until well after we got back from town and well after dark when he finally came into the kitchen and said,

– ummm...aaah...you know the tractor?...well...I can't find it.

It took a while to find out what had happened because there was a lot of shouting and after a while I went and sat under the table (said Dad) but what had happened was this. Hughie started up the tractor and set it going up the track and then he went to start the old ute, and the old ute went like this.

R-R-R-R-R-R  
R-R-R-R-R  
R-R-R-R  
r-r-r-r  
r-r-r  
r-r  
r  
r

– I bet you flooded it, you galah, said grandad.

Meanwhile the tractor was going slowly up the track, going nice and straight but slowly getting further and further away.

And Hughie was still trying to start the ute. But now it wasn't even making that little click noise. So Hughie decided the battery was probably flat.

– Probably! Says grandad.

Hughie decided he better catch up with the tractor which was now about to go over the top of the hill and it was getting dark. So he runs up to the top of the hill and when he gets there he can't see the tractor at all.

After a bit of a think he walks back to the house to tell grandad about it.

When everyone finished shouting gran says well, there's no point looking for it in the dark and Hughie hasn't had his tea yet and I don't think the Hogans next door will appreciate being asked to make a search party – not after last time.

So grandad and Hughie go out next morning to find the tractor. They came to the top of the paddock and there was no sign of the tractor.

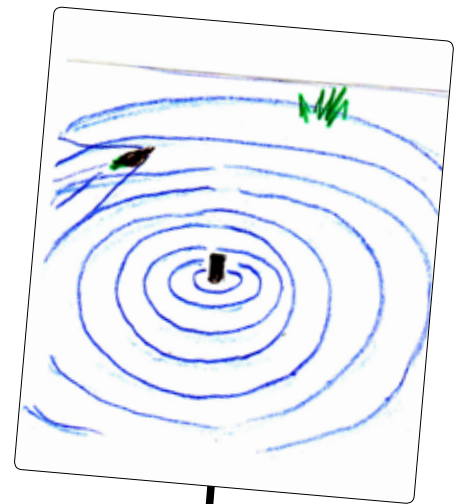
– Maybe it went round in a big circle and back down over the hill again, says Hughie.

– Maybe pigs fly, says grandad, but we'll have a look anyway.

As they are going past the dam Hughie says,

– I don't remember us putting a pipe out there in the middle of the...Oh.

So that's how they found the tractor and yes the only bit you could see was the exhaust pipe sticking out and uncle Hughie said that night he was going to leave the farm and be a prospector but it all ended happily because the insurance man was a good mate of Grandads and he got a (fairly) new tractor out of it.



*With thanks to my brother Fergus who originally told me this (true) story. HR*