

When I was about 13 or 14 years of age I used to help the local butcher who by this time had brought a Model T Ford van. I helped him on Saturdays deliver the meat on the country rounds, eventually I was allowed to drive the van with the butcher of course. I must have driven it hundreds of miles but in those days there was hardly any other traffic. My pay was usually a shin-bone of beef to make a stew.

I stayed on at school until I was 15 years old. There wasn't much to do other than farm work. I would have liked to have been a mechanic but the nearest place to learn that trade was in Barnstaple and you had to pay £50 to be taken on and you had to travel to and fro or lodge there which my father couldn't afford.

My first job after leaving school was road making. Driving a horse and butt, I used to start work at 6.30 am by feeding and cleaning the horses. Then it would be a breakfast of two fried herrings and a rasher of bacon with fried potatoes, lovely!

We had to 'tackle -up' the horses and get to our place of work by 8.00am. I did this for the first winter for six shillings a week (30p) plus food. Many a day I would come home wet through as there was no such thing as water proofs in those days. The only protection was a sack round our shoulders and another round our legs.

The roads were made with stones and mud, rolled down by a steam-roller. When the stones were spread and the mud spread over them the roller would roll them down. It was then I used to get up on the steam roller and be allowed to drive the thing. The engine driver was always glad of a break from the monotony of going backwards and forwards. Though he remained in the engine attending to the controls etc.

The stones were 'Ripped' (to use the correct expression) in the local quarries and then carted out to depots by the roadside where they were cracked up to the size of hens eggs. This was done mainly by one during the summer. The road making was done in the winter as water was used so much and was more plentiful then.

I was fairly good at woodwork at school and this served me in good stead as I used to 'knock-up,' a fowl house, or shed occasionally for a few shillings. All the work on the farm was done by the horses and we were able to earn a copper or two leading the horses doing horse hoeing or drilling during the tilling season.

I worked on a small farm for a time, getting up early to see to the sheep, carting out dung and spreading it and repairing the hedges. Eventually I was sent out with the horses to do the ploughing after an afternoon's tuition.

I can't say I enjoyed it as the horses were a bit highly strung, especially for a youngster! There were some good ploughmen around at the time. A big farmer used to employ a **Horseman** to do all the horse work and the ploughing etc.

I often wonder what they thought of my work. Getting the ground ready for tilling was very tiring, one must have walked miles in a day. I was getting six shillings a week and perhaps a meal or two as well.