

The Blacksmith's shop was always an attraction , especially when he was shoeing one of the big farm horses - and the excitement of being allowed to blow the fire! Little did I know that in years to come I would be doing it for hours on end binding wheels.

The mail was taken to Umberleigh in a canvas mail bag slung across the pony's shoulders in front of the rider, who was the postman's son. The incoming mail was brought back in the same way.

Phones were none existent, all messages were sent by telegram. I have delivered many, in the Parish and outside, for 6d (2.5p).

Cider was the main drink in the country, nearly every farmer made it, and believe you me, it was good stuff! Pure apple juice, no additives. I have seen many a man 'legless' after drinking two pints.

There was always a policeman around, each parish had one and they used to meet up at their parish boundaries at set times. Look out if you were caught doing anything you shouldn't be. The punishment was a clip on the ear and you dare not tell your parents or you would get another one!

We burnt mostly wood in the stove and my father, who worked on a farm, used to cut it down during the summer time in readiness for the coming winter. I used to carry his tea to him as he would stay on after work and cut the wood down. This would be cut off a hedge which had become too tall. It meant cutting off the wood and making faggots of the branches which was used to light the fire, the rest was used to cut into ten foot lengths. (There is a picture to go with this section which gives the visual picture.)

The wood was brought home by pony and cart and then cut up by hand with a 'Cross-cut' saw, a two man or rather a man and boy operation!

Our coal was fetched from the Portsmouth Arms Station, about 2.5 miles away, by horse and cart, at a rate of about 2/-(20p) per cwt. (112lbs).

Fetching coal from the station was usually done with two horses and carts. When they got to the very steep part, they would 'Let-Out' one horse and prop the shafts on an empty barrel or something for that purpose. Then hitch one horse in front of the other to take the load to the top of the hill. Both horses were then 'Let-Out', the cart was propped up, and the horses taken down hill to fetch the other cart. This way they could take much bigger loads, perhaps a ton at a time. I have helped to do this many times.

Water wheels were still in use when I was a lad and I remember riding down to the local mill 'Pulley Mills' with the farmer to have his corn ground, it was thrilling to see the great water wheel going round providing power. I didn't think then that one day I would be restoring it, but that is another story.

I also remember seeing the teeth of the big cog wheels being renewed. This was being done by the firm I eventually served my apprenticeship with.