

THREE GENERATIONS OF BLACKSMITHS

Reminiscences of Geoff Dodd, 32 High Street, Spalding, recorded on 9 September 2004

In the County Archives there is a record of a Peter Dodd, husbandman, a small farmer of South Kyme in the middle 1500s, the inventory of his possessions. He died in 1569, and there are other documents of the 1600s where the same Dodd appears in several places. However, in 1842 William Dodd is recorded as living and farming at White House Farm, which is still there, a small sized farm of 56 acres at the bottom of South Kyme Fen. He was a tenant of Lord Brownlow. The farmhouse and the range of buildings, barns and stables, lofts set around a crew yard, typical of that period probably built for lease to a tenant. He, or perhaps his father, had probably been the first occupants, as the Fen was only drained in the early 1800s, which is only a few years before the time we are talking about and before that of course the Fen would not have been viable as agricultural land. At the same time another tenant farmer with something like 170 acres was Banks Chambers who lived at the Manor House. He wasn't Lord of the Manor. In the Manor before Banks Chambers had lived there a Mr Willy Dickinson, who farmed some 500 acres and before him at the Manor an Anthony Peacock, who had been Lord Brownlow's agent.

William Dodd married Banks Chambers' daughter and their son Banks, who was named after his grandfather, of the manor house, was born in 1840 and married Ann Thorpe of Heckington in 1861, and they lived in Heckington Fen. Their first child, a boy, was born in 1862 and over the next ten years they produced five more children, all boys and a seventh, another boy, in 1875 after William Dodd had taken the White House Farm from his father. The eldest boy was christened William Dickenson Dodd and that indicates a family link with Willy Dickenson, the 500-acre farmer from the manor house 40 years earlier.

The third son died in 1875 at nine years old. He was also Banks and my father, his nephew, was Banks Dodd and I, the great, great, great, grandson of Banks Chambers, have a middle name Banks as well. I have two nephews, neither of whom has a son and I have only got two daughters, so it looks as if this will be the end of the Dodd line as far as I am concerned anyway.

Ann Dodd seems to have been a rather presumptuous lady, as I had it from an aunt, and I am afraid that she had quite a lot of her grandmother about her. "Oh, she was always a lady, driving to market (Sleaford, probably) in her trap, with a pony and she always wore a fur coat." On Sundays she entertained the vicar to lunch after the service whilst the boys ate boiled bacon in the kitchen, I suppose if you were the daughter-in-law of the big farmer of the man who lived in the Manor House then you had to try to keep up appearances. All the same, to farm 56 acres was reasonable standing, I suppose.

Serious agricultural depression in the 1880s and 1890s and the boys seemed to have no particular incentive to stay on the farm, which could not have supported them anyhow. The fifth son Charles did take on the farm and it is recorded that in the 1920s that he still held that farm, but it seems not very successfully. He was a very sad figure as I remember him when we went to see him in the 1930s. He was then living in one room of his house, which was a lovely big old house, once the gamekeeper's cottage which was built of stone that had been taken from the ruins of Kyme Castle. The one room he lived in with a room above it, probably not much more than a loft. It had an enormous cupboard which puzzled me then when about seven or eight years old. He told me that it was another bedroom. Well, it was another sleeping place anyway. (6'48")

There was the duck pond in the middle of the yard and the game store with the rows and rows all round it with a ?? in the middle. My brother recalls it as a circular building, we couldn't have been more than about six or eight years old at the time. Across the field is the

Lucy Tower that an Umfraville built after his wife Lucy. A couple - a Mr and Mrs Castledyne was their name I think - looked after Uncle Charlie and they occupied the rest of the house in return, I remember. Mr Castledyne showed me a young vixen that he had caught and he put a leather dog collar around its neck and chained it into a barn. The next time that we went to see him he reckoned she had been freed by a dog fox that had chewed through the collar.

The house was a Land Army hostel during the war, but now it has been modernised and extended and the yard and duck pond have been landscaped and it is occupied by a lady who is a descendant of Banks Chambers. She only recalls my great-uncle Charlie riding his bike very unsteadily side to side of the road and that confirms what I suspected when I got a bit older and understood that it is what I recognised 60 years or so ago.

Another brother, the second, John, was a wheelwright and joiner at Tarry Hill, Swineshead and two of them were butchers, one at Bourne. The fourth son George born in 1867 was my grandfather. Tired of boiled bacon and was not attracted to the sort of life when his father said to him "Come on boy. It's too wet to work today, get your coat on and we shall go and mend the gates and fences." So he was indentured to apprentice to blacksmithing in Swineshead, that would be 5, perhaps 7 years, round about 1880. In 1872 there were 7 blacksmiths in Swineshead; we don't know very much about them. There are a couple of stories that have been told. His boss had to leave him alone in the workshop for a day and said, "George, you had better make a few gate hasps while I've gone." The gate hasp is the part of the 5-bar gate that is stapled to the gate and hooks into a staple on the gate post. It would be a nice piece of practice work for an apprentice; it wouldn't use very much iron, if it was wasted it would be no great loss, they would always be useful stock to have in the workshop; blacksmiths would always be needing gate hasps.

His boss came home and the gate hasps were lined up on the anvil for inspection and his boss picked one up, looked at it. "Gate hasp! I wouldn't chuck one like this down my privy!" "Well, you needn't worry, Master, there is three down there worse than that!"

And then a gang of them went to Heckington Feast. Whether they had walked from South Kyme Fen or if they had set out from Swineshead, where he was working, either way, it would be a good six mile walk, I should think. They had had a good day and were walking home and one turned to the rest of them and said "We ain't had a fight." So they turned on their heels, went back to Heckington to pick a quarrel with somebody to complete the day.

He left Swineshead and went to Newmarket working with race-horses, which was well-paid, as it is today. Simply with the idea of putting together some capital to set himself up in business. Most of his mates he said had lost the pay that they got, backing the same horses. However, in 1898, thirty years old then would be, in the meantime he married Elizabeth Badcock at Burwell, who had been in service with the Jellis family, who were horse trainers, and with one child, a daughter, he did *"of George Leverley in the County of Lincoln, master mariner and Joseph Bradford Arch, of the same place, Ironmonger, agree to rent and hire, of the landlords all that messuage or dwelling house, buildings yard and premises and all the blacksmiths shop lying opposite to the same, situated at the bottom of the High Street in Spalding aforesaid in the occupancy of Edward Fisher"* and for that he paid a rent of £16 a year. The workshop had been previously the property of Joseph Rose, blacksmith, who had died in 1814, so quite probably he had built the workshop which we think had been put up a bit before 1800.

There is a document relating to Joseph Rose's daughter, Rachel Christian, wife of William, blacksmith, and presumably he had taken his father-in-law's business. They had a daughter who had married Ben Neill, a blacksmith of Gosberton Risegate and they had two sons, Jim and John, who were both blacksmiths, and these two brothers Christian were the forbears of the Christian & Dobbs of Long Sutton.

Edward Fisher rented the workshop for some time and in 1849 bought it from the then owner William White, mariner. The designation 'mariner' crops up a number of times in the deeds and documents relating to the workshops, so it seems they had built up enough capital to invest in property *"For and in consideration of the sum of £190 of lawful British money, to him, the said William White in hand was well and truly paid by Edward Fisher of Spalding aforesaid blacksmith."* The workshop described is *"that blacksmiths shop, shoeing shed and coal yard, east by the Turnpike Road [that is the present High Street] on the west by the River Wetland"* It stands right on the river bank, a few feet from the water. The sail maker's shop that was mentioned was still in ships and boat supplies in 1898 when grandfather came but it was converted into a fish and chip shop by 1911 by the Knipe family of New Road. Father fetched the fish for Frank Knipe from the railway station in a little hand cart for a 1/2d or a 1d a day.

With the workshop, Grandfather bought Edward Fisher's little cottage which is just across the road from the workshop which later became my father and mother's home and has been mine for 40 years.

At the end of the 1800s there were 11 master blacksmiths between Spalding Common and Fulney, including Annie Coates on the Bourne Road, I presume. She was a widow carrying on her husband's business; then of course there would be the employed men, even more I should think, whose names don't get into the Post Office directories. Some of these were out of business over the next 30 years or so. By then Johnson Brothers in Bath Lane employed around seven or eight blacksmiths.

I've not come across anybody who had actually seen the bath that Dr Morris constructed in Bath Lane for medicinal purposes. My father took me to see it certainly before the Second World War. It was rather like the baptistery in a Baptist church. It is difficult to remember how big, but probably ten or twelve feet long and five or six wide and was lined out white glazed tiles, with steps down to it. It was only in an outhouse, a storeroom at that time, so presumably he added those to it.

There was Leverton's too, similar to Johnson Brothers, who employed quite a number of blacksmiths. Herbert Leverton from Quadring at this time in the early 1900s had started the Leverton's business in a workshop in the High Street not far away and he and Grandfather were contemporaries and friends. Herbert Leverton in his early days offered my grandfather a partnership for £100 and was told that "there would never be any money in tractors, Herbert!"

By the late 1940s there were only Charlie Pack at Little London, quite a long-established business, and Henry Smith, who had worked for Bentley Haw the blacksmith in Gore Lane, off the Sheep Market, when Bentley Haw had closed his business. Henry had taken a workshop in the bottom of a warehouse near the Crane but at the bottom of Herring Lane and later on moved to a blacksmith's shop in the Black Swan Yard, and my workshop of course was still there; but another 20 years after that there was only my workshop left.

The workshop has not been very much altered since my grandfather took it over. I don't suppose that it has been very much altered since it was built. The floor is a mixture of boarded floor that is typical, sawn down the middle with the round side into the soil - there is not much of that left now - some stone slabs which were laid down by the benches and the anvil. There is a mill-stone let into the floor, some of it bare earth, and concrete that I put in over the years where the wood has worn away. It has a pantile roof which has been strengthened at some time or other, which makes me think that perhaps before the tiles were put on it had been thatched. A shoeing shed at the end has space for a couple of horses. There were originally two forges in the workshop; one of them I took out after

Grandfather died. It was rather awkwardly placed, tight to a wall, and I can only once remember the two forges being used at the same time, Grandfather and Father working, must have been certainly round about 1935 at least. The one which was built against the wall, if you had a long length of iron to put in the fire, there was a hole in the wall you could push the iron through, and I hadn't been working very long when a chap came into the shop - I knew him vaguely - "I shall tell you a story," he said, and I have never told anybody from that day to this, "I was coming home from school with my mates and we looked and we looked in the shoeing shed and saw this bit of iron poked through the hole in the wall. 'Look, old Doddy has a bit of iron in the fire. If we pull it through, he will get it hot in the wrong place.' But old Doddy already had it in the fire before he got hold of it and I told my Mum that we had burned our hands in a bonfire."

There were around about, well, before the First World War and to the First World War I suppose, a hundred horses stabled within 100 yards of the workshop. Birch's the millers and corn merchants up the road had about forty, and Lee and Green's on the other side of the river at the pop factory had a number of horses for their drays; and Osmond's, who had the Albion Warehouse that later on was converted to the Geest White House Chambers, and there is a good photograph of the warehouse before it was converted in Thorold's "Shell Guide to Lincolnshire". I think there is probably one in "Aspects of Spalding" too.

Nicholl's were hay & straw merchants who had what is now a shop not quite opposite the workshop, but just across the road and several smaller businesses. Jack Cutts was a potato and vegetable merchant in a small way of business in a small warehouse on Commercial Road, towards West Elloe Bridge.

Jack and several other higgler, men in a small way of business, perhaps had one horse, trolley and a plough and ploughed up allotments. People had quite big allotments in those days. Jack unfortunately used to get very drunk on market days. When we were children, to see him come home from the pub on a Tuesday afternoon, we would follow behind him rolling along the road just like him following him like the kids followed the Pied Piper.

Jack Cutts's pony died, and I have it from my father that it was traditional if any way a higgler lost his horse and hadn't the money to replace it - and probably he hadn't - he would start a little book with a note book and solicit the neighbours for a donation towards another pony. Jack started up a for donations but he never got round to buying his horse.

The big houses with a couple of horses for the carriage and a pony for the garden. There was Clay Hall where the Birches lived and Chislehurst has gone, just to the northern side of Clay Hall, which was John Grundy's house. In the 1700s Welland House, next door to Grandfather's little cottage where the Gleeds lived from the 20s onwards, across the river there was Langtoft House where Sam Mossop lived and the house next door Willerby where the Maples lived. So horse-shoeing was a significant part of the business. Birch's we mentioned. Wagoners getting back perhaps in the middle of the afternoon after they had been to perhaps long Sutton, Crowland or Bourne which would be 18 or 20 miles or so, they would be looking out to see whether George Birch would be standing on the pavement outside the mill, whether he was rubbing his hands or scratching his bottom! If he was scratching his bottom there was a fair chance that they would probably be sent out on another journey again late in the afternoon as far as Cowbit or Moulton, six or eight miles.

Lee and Green's pop factory, part of the old buildings in Albion Street occupied the northern half of what had been the old brewery buildings along the back wall. It had very tall lettering painted from one end to the other. It had been painted out once but it had kept showing through more and more clearly year by year. "Ever flowing, ever pure, Lee and Green's, manufacturers of aerated waters, brewers of ginger beer."

In White's Directory they are described as, " aerated water manufacturers, high class waters, made only from Bourne Springs, and wholesale cigar merchants". My father used to tell of hearing the ginger beer bottles exploding during the night. They exploded in the daytime as well but he could hear them at night and charging when they were let out of Westlode Street School. Headmaster was Mr Church and running between that jetty between the two halves of the old brewery buildings where the old Westlode river used to run into the Welland. It is culverted now, shouting "Pop Hole - Pop - Hole" and racing to get to the open gully where the water from the factory ran into to river and where the glass balls out of the necks of the broken pop-bottles got washed out with the water down into the river, for marbles, of course.

My grandfather had taken the required exams to style himself a registered shoeing smith and he could put the initials RSS after his name which involved practical examinations, a certain amount of veterinary knowledge relating to horse legs and feet, as is now quite rightly a legal requirement for anyone who can practice as a farrier. But he always described himself as a shoeing and general smith, as my father and I have done so too, as a farrier would only shoe horses.

When he started in business in 1898 the charge for a set of horse shoes was 2s4d or 7d per shoe, and I have several of his ledgers, day books, the first one runs from 1913. Then I've got three others right up to 1947, but he didn't put that 2/4 charge up until September 1914 when it went up to 8d per shoe and 2s8d per set. 'Removes', that is refitting a shoe that had not been worn out. A horse's hoof keeps growing of course and if it gets to a stage where you have to take off the shoe and trim the foot down and put the shoe back, that was called a 'remove' and that was half-price, 3/2d a foot.

A farm horse not doing any road work wouldn't need to be shod all round; it would probably have the front feet shod. If it was doing all land work probably it had no shoes at all and the feet would just need trimming occasionally, probably once a month, and trimming was charged at 2d each foot. A vet would say that a horse really needs shoeing once a month. Most of them would go a bit longer and if they were doing road work constantly they might wear out a pair of shoes in a couple of weeks. Getting around town on good roads, Birch's had a horse that Grandfather called "a slawmy old thing" that could wear out a set of shoes in less than a week. In the winter, when the roads were icy, the shoes would be fitted with frost studs perhaps, which fitted into a square tapered hole in the heel of the shoe. And when those studs were worn out they could be taken out and replaced. More often they would be 'roughed' - that would be fitted with frost nails in the place of ordinary horseshoe nails. If the weather turned frosty the horses would come up to the workshop and the original ordinary nails would be taken out one at a time and replaced with a frost nail that would have a hardened chisel point in the head. These might only last a couple of days, so there would be a queue of horses early in the morning, some of Birch's waiting to be 'roughed' and of course that would be in winter time when the days were very short, probably they would be there before breakfast and before it was daylight. In the day book the first entry for the 13th January in 1913 is 88 feet 'roughed', that's 88 times 7 nails to be taken out and replaced before breakfast.

The shoeing shed at the end of the workshop was open fronted to the road and quite often we would find tramps in there or a tramp in the morning or Grandfather would anyway when he went to work, often after a night at the "The Grubber", the Pinchbeck Road Union buildings. They could stay a night there, but only limited to one night and in the morning. They probably would beg a handful of rolled oats or flaked maize up at Birch's, then some water from one of the houses, perhaps from my mother or my grandmother and bring it into the workshop to boil up into a sort of porridge on the forge before they set out on their next day's walk, probably as far as Beggar's Bush at Weston where they would spend the night

sleeping rough and then probably again walk on to "The Grubber" at Holbeach for a proper bed for the next night.

Factory made shoes had been made available from around 1860 and they were fairly general by 1880. There was a firm at Stamford manufacturing them, Pledgers, a firm that my grandfather used to buy iron from at that time. They were sold by the hundredweight and in sizes across the width of the shoe and then the size of the iron they were made from, sat 1" x 3/8". They would be beaten to shape and the nail holes punched, 7 nails that is, 4 on the outside and 3 on the inside of the shoe, and they needed the toe clip forging and then the nail holes cleared and then the shoe would be adjusted to fit the foot and burned to fit.

Grandfather and Father would also do quite a lot of cold shoeing, travelling out to the farm and shoeing the horses and take a bit more care to trim the foot down so that the shoe fitted comfortably then they would be nailed on cold. On that same day we talked about, 13th January 1913, they put on 71 new shoes and 67 'removes' and trimmed 56 feet, bearing in mind that putting 'removes' on takes the same amount of time as fitting new shoes. This would be a fair day's work. I think that Grandfather could possibly have employed two men at that time, certainly one, and he also had another workshop down by "The Pigeon" corner. I don't think he had it very long and these 130-odd shoes probably included this shop as well, but even so it was a good day's work. I reckon that I would have done fairly well if I had managed to fit four shoes in an hour, but I would not like to have worked at the rate that they did, bearing in mind that this was January, short days. There was a small gas jet in the workshop and there was only one other item entered in the day book: total for the day was £5-10-8, that is for 71 new shoes, 67 removes, 56 feet and roughing 88. That was exceptional, but horse shoeing certainly accounted for half the entries in the day book nearly every day through 1913 and amounted to considerably more than half the turnover. My father once recalled saying to father as they locked up the workshop door, "We have not shod a horse today." I wonder when that might have been?

Grandfather's family was getting bigger, though I'm not quite sure exactly when, but he did move over the river into Albion Street for a few years. He certainly moved back to High Street in 1928. Some of his near neighbours and contemporaries over in Albion Street: right next door was Tommy Law of T Law & Son and a few doors down the road on the town side of his house lived Sidney Gibbs the shoemaker, who had come to live in Spalding from Northamptonshire. They were roughly the same age as my grandfather. Bill Edgar lived close by the Chain Bridge, the tailor; he lived and had his shop there. They were all quite close friends and the sons of the various families were close friends of my father.

Joe Arnold the coach-painter had a home right next to the jetty leading from the Chain Bridge to Albion Street. He was also a barber. Joe was a little bit eccentric. He had a full beard and a jolly 'roundy' wife with a broad Lancashire accent. They both or each rode a tricycle always, and whenever there was a carnival they decorated their tricycles to take part in the parades. (007-2.09)

Joe Arnold opposite the "Ship Albion" pub. My grandfather said that Joe was charging 'Ad for a shave; it was worthwhile to pay 1d and go to another barber and get a smooth one. In that short stretch of road on Albion Street Kate Hemfrey sold cakes and pastries from a little two-up-two-down cottage, but she had a little bake house in the garden at the back.

Colvin's had their grocers shop right opposite the Chain Bridge jetty and a nursery behind there that had belonged to another bearded gentleman, Mr Wilcox, who was one of the leading members of the Pentecostal Church in Love Lane.

Bob Bennett had a little grocers shop only a few doors away and a few doors further along on Albion Street was Sadd's grocers shop., And on the other side of the road in the row of

little cottages on the river side of Albion Street, Miss Hurling, similarly in two-up-two-down cottage had a bake house at the back and sold cakes and pastries as well.

In that row also was Charlie Dickenson, the chimney sweep, who used to clean the chimney at our house when we were children. When he was pushing his brushes up he would send us outside to tell him when it had come through the chimney, which he knew anyway, but it amuse us. "Beeze" Pepper, tinsmith, who worked for Johnson Brothers, Captain Hayes. On the river side of the road lived Captain Hayes, whose warehouse had the door on it on the bank opposite Holland Road roughly, the door with "Capt. J Hayes, Best Victoria Coal Store" carved into it. That has now gone; where the door is I'm not sure, but I hope it is being looked after. On the opposite side of the road to the river was Massey's Excelsior Engineering Works. In the Museum at Lincoln there is or was, I certainly saw, a lathe "Maker H B Massey, Spalding". They did in fact build small steam engines in the late 1880s for small boats, a little twin cylinder engine. Hal White of the Green, by the police Station (it was then known as White's Green). Hal White was a coach painter and on the side between the Green and the Police Station was the old Council School. All this was within my memory. There was Ginny Taylor who had a sweet shop. You could buy sweets for $\frac{1}{2}$ or a 1d. On the other side of the school was Ginny Sparks, again a sweet shop in a 2-up, 2-down cottage, and the other cottage of the pair was a cycle repair shop, a Mr Skoins had his business and before that... name's gone! Over the road on Westlode Street Tome and Peake Forman had their pop factory. Tom and Peake had originally worked at Lee and Green's and set up their own business when lee and green closed down.

Grandfather was also Harbour Master, for which he was paid £5 a year. I don't think the duties were very onerous. I think mainly to make sure that the waterway was kept clear of obstructions, derelict boats and so on. Certainly Ray Thorpe, who was the son of Mark Thorpe, the horse dealer from the White Lion Pub at the top of High Street, Ray said that Grandfather had made him move a derelict boat from the banks. He also, for another £5 a year had charge of the old Chain Bridge. The original bascule type bridge that lifted was known as the Chain Bridge because it was pulled up on chains. The bridge my grandfather looked after was properly known as the Albert Bridge, 1844 built roughly at the same time as the Victoria Bridge at the other end of the town. But the Albeit Bridge was never known as anything other than the Chain Bridge. The wooden piles are still there on both sides. It was a footbridge that was pivoted on the High Street side of the river. Certainly my father told me that (I'm a bit vague about this) but around 1918 Grandfather went on holiday for a week and told Father that if he looked after the bridge for that week he could have the money that was paid for the opening, which was about 1/- (one shilling) for each opening. And Father certainly remembers drawing thirty shillings from Birch's for 30 boats that they had had up in one month. Sometimes two would come up at once, but it would need a fairly good tide. George Plowman certainly told me that they didn't bring any boats up after the First World War, probably a bit after that.

But as far back as I can remember, certainly several boats came through each month. Birch's were just about the only one but occasionally a Drainage Board barge. Birch's had several barges, not narrow boats like the canal barges, but wide, flat-bottomed barges - one of them the "Sarah Birch" and the "Violet Birch". They were named after George Birch's daughters. The "Pride of the Welland" had a small paraffin engine and it would come up loaded and probably tow one or maybe two barges with it, but usually they came up on the tide and a couple of chaps with barge poles would keep them in the middle of the stream and perhaps give them a helpful push now and again. (7: 10.09)

I only once remember seeing a horse towing a barge up river, but I would think that in earlier days probably horses were used a bit more often when trade was busier, when they couldn't always wait for the tide. Other than the barges I only remember a coaster which was the

"Agriculture", which they tell me. I suppose I used to watch it from the front room window of the house. I knew when the "Agriculture" came up; it had masts and I am told I knew it as "Concircum". Where I manufactured the name from I don't know! Birch's crane on the end of the Black Granary was the last of the cranes on the river bank, the only one that I can remember. It was a little pulley with fixed jib crane, again with a paraffin engine, just inside the Black Granary and driven by shafts through the wall. It was used to empty barges. The men either carried the sacks or put them on a sack barrow and cross the road into the warehouses on the other side of High Street.

A little bit to the west to the top of Albion Street, opposite what was then the Post Office which Mrs Lanham kept. Her son, Gordon Lanham, was Vicar or Rector of Bourne. Opposite the Post Office was the "Stringer". It was a sort of recess in the river bank like a little bay, not as deep as the river, but there was enough water at high tide anyway for the boats to reverse from 150 yards or so from Birch's and put the stern of the boat into the bay and swing it round to turn to go back to Fosdyke. A shame really, but it was filled in. That is a little bit of history that has gone.

In the spring and autumn at the high tides there was the egre or a tidal bore. I think only the Severn, Trent and the Welland still have an egre. I understand that it can still be seen at certain times of the year as far as Surfleet, It was a wave that might be nearly one foot high and we used to run along the river bank, trying to keep up with it. I can't remember whether we could or couldn't quite, but it came up quite quickly and we would be shouting "Eego, Eego, Eego!".

Father was down the river once with a friend in his "shout", that is a little narrow boat that is very low in the water and you could paddle it. It was used for wild-fowling and father says "Hey up, we will get swamped, the egre is coming". He had spotted it. "Hold on", Chick said, and he turned the boat beam on and said, "Give us your hand" and he put one foot on the gunwale. As the egre hit it he rocked it one way and then the other so that it climbed up the wave.

My grandfather had a boat of his own longer ago than I can remember called the "Silvery Wave" and he would drag for butts or presumably drag and reckoned that between "The Pigeon" and Cowhirm or Cowhorn, as it is usually known, it is only a couple of miles down the river, but between "The Pigeon" and Cowhirm, he would get enough butts for himself and his friends. Whether he used to drag, which would be fixed to a rope and with hooks or a hook prick, which is rather like a garden rake with tines straight in line with the handle, barbed tines which you can push up and down. They were used in creeks as well as in the river, and in the workshop there was always a box of big -Grandfather called them "cod hooks". I know they were about four inches long and two inches wide, a big fish hook and an eye at the end and they were for making butt drags. I think I only made one butt drag, but you would bolt these hooks every 3 or 4 inches to a bar of iron and then fix a chain yoke to each end and fix it to a rope which would drag along the bottom of the river for catching butts. Incidentally, the same people who made horse nails made fish hooks and in the workshop there were five eel "gleeves", like a trident on a long handle for catching eels. Locally they are known as "gleeves". I heard people who came from the Wisbech area also called them "pilgers" or "stangs".

There was a little chap who used to come to the workshop who was known as Tommy Dip because he was lame and had a limp. I think he was really Tommy Waterfall, but he actually sold eels. An eel trap traditionally is made out of wicker with a closed compartment at the narrow end, where you put the bait in and at the wider entrance it had sharpened pieces of wicker so the eels could get in and couldn't find their way out again. But Tommy used to make eel hives out of chicken wire and would lay them round in the drains between

the fields baited with chicken guts. And used to ride round from trap to trap on his bike with a hessian sack put over the handlebars for the eels. He did bring us a bait to the workshop once, 5 eels and threw them down on the workshop floor to get them dusty so that they didn't slide in his fingers. He skinned and gutted them there and then, sitting on the workshop doorstep.

Drains, Jack Worley was an old, old friend, was a school master at the Willesby School for the later years of the Willesby School 'til it was closed. He was headmaster, but he told me his home was the Melton Mowbray area and when he first started school he set the kids an essay to write what they had done in their holidays and one lad had written about fishing in the drain. Now the only drain that Jack knew was the hole where the washing up water goes outside the kitchen. "Come out here, boy," he said, "come out here!".

In the Welland in the Spring us boys fished for eels, "totting" we called it. It only needed a cane, not a proper fishing rod and string, line, no reel and a lot was the biggest fattest earth worms you could dig and you threaded them on to a length of worsted three or four feet long, threaded it in opened of the worm and out of the other till you got a long string of worms, then doubled it up and doubled it up lot until you got this lump of juicy worms. The eels bit at it and the theory was that their teeth got stuck in the worsted, but if you pulled it out very, very carefully in the direction of the tide you could throw up the eel on the bank and then dash to catch it before it got back into the water.. But of course the first when you started fishing, two or three of you, "First cuts! First cuts!" If your lines got tangled if you had "first cuts" you could cut your mate's line.

There was always a box of old nuts on the bench and bolts that is, for boys would come "Blacksmith, have you got a nut for a sinker, Mr Blacksmith?" to sink the lot in the water.. Well, it wasn't always shoeing and fishing, so what?

On the very first page of that 1913 day book you will find: J Peeke, grub are mended - 8 pence. Now Jack Peeke had a building and carpentry business in Double Street. He was certainly an eccentric, to say the least. He made his own coffin and it stood in the workshop a long, long time before he died. He was walking through his workshop one day and an apprentice lad who wasn't aware that he was there was measuring a piece of wood and said to himself "Well, that's near enough". Jack Peeke said "No laddie, near enough I not near enough. Measure it again." So he measures it again and he says "Now laddie?" "It's exactly right, Mr Peeke." "That's near enough!", he said! He carried a plank of wood from that workshop in Double Street down to my grandfather's workshop and put it on the floor, so that he could sit on it with his hands and his feet in the air to show my grandfather how he could jump from one end of the plank on his bottom without touching the floor.

He was buried in his best suit, which perhaps wouldn't be usual in those days, with his watch and chain on his waistcoat and Cis Knight, who used to work for him and later went to work for Jack Wilson, he said "I could have had that watch. I screwed him down." Anybody who knew Cis even slightly would know that he wouldn't even dream of taking the watch, but he told me that. (007 23.45)

Here's an item with a query. "Motor repaired : l/-" "Lee & Green, two globe stays" - what they might be I don't know - "4/6". "Brake altered l/-" "Edwards. Two knives ground 6d". "Maddison, door handle replaced, 4d" no "repaired". "Plough key made - 6d" That was a key for some of the bolts are adjustable on ploughs. Instead of having a square head or a hexagon head there was a little ring and put the key in the ring to turn the bolt. "12 pig rings - 4d" Pig rings were made out of horse nails. The horse nail was flattened into a sort of oval, then that oval was rolled up to make a "tee" and the pig ring was pushed through the nose and then the thin part of the nail was wound up with something rather like a corned beef can

key on the other side of the nostril. They made 12 of these for 4d. Another item: "Woody. I mole-spade, paid 2/6d" Half-a-crown was quite a lot of money but a mole spade would be rather stronger than an ordinary spade. Billy Barnard, who lived by Fulney Bridge, was a mole catcher and you would see his mole traps out in the fields with a withy and a string bent down. The withy would serve as a spring and a noose on the bottom buried in the mole run. Of course, when you caught the mole the withy sprang up; it was fastened down with a peg and when it was sprung the trap went off so the mole was suspended and he knew where he had got them. And there were boards propped up by the side of his house with moleskins tacked out for drying.

"Cart oiled - 3d". "Pan bottom soldered - 8 pence" A young lady brought me a kettle once to see if I could solder a little hole in the bottom. I picked up a screwdriver off the bench and said, "Really it isn't worthwhile. Look, my dear, it is thin there and it is thin there. It is going to be all holes in a little while." And I poked the screwdriver through it. She looked at me aghast but perhaps she thought it was worth it because I married her.

"Smart. Blower - 1/3d" A blower would be the hood that went over an old-fashioned fire grate with a small grate in the middle and an oven on one side and a water boiler on the other. Then there was a hood which fitted over the top to take the smoke up. Above the smoke hood there was a soot plate. Now this is 1913, but in the 1950s I was still making soot plates and blowers - at rather more than 1/3d!

All sorts of farm implements at the same time, ploughs, harrows and drags, particularly in the winter time, they would come in for servicing really. "Harrows repaired and 40 teeth sharpened - 6/-" In 1915. If they were not too fully worn they would just be re-sharpened, if they were badly worn they would be "laid", that is they would have a small piece of iron forged-welded on the end of the harrow and then draw it out and sharpen it again. (007: 28.50)

An item "Coulter laid -1/-". The coulter was the enormous knife blade that cut the edge of the furrows on a plough and of course at this time were largely made of iron, which is comparatively soft, not tool steel, or very little of it, so a coulter could wear out quite quickly anyway; probably it would need laying after two seasons ploughing. And again, quite a big lump of metal would have to be forge welded on to the coulter and then it would be hammered out to a sharp edge. Of course, forge welding was all Grandfather was able to do. I think that there was gas welding at this stage but not for ordinary blacksmiths. At the front of the forge on the top was a little hollow and about 4 inches across and an inch and a half deep. This was full of sand and pieces of metal that were going to be forge welded together when they got almost to a welding heat nearly to being molten, would be rolled in this sand which formed a casing round it which held the metal together whilst it was at this very soft stage, then pooped back into the forge, not that it was easy anyway, quite a lot of skill, the actual position of the iron in the fire itself is critical, too low down and the iron is near the nozzle where the blast comes in and blowing oxygen on to the bit of metal at welding heat would tend to burn it, so the position in the fire was fairly important. Shoeing wheels was quite a big proportion of the work I suppose after shoeing horses, putting the iron tyres on and I should think this probably need more skill and experience than any other job, perhaps even more than shoeing the horses. If the tyre was too big when it was heated to expand and fitted and then cooled down as quickly as you can, once it has been dropped on, cooling it down with cans of water which I had helped to do as a lad to shrink it. If it is too small, it is too tight and it would split the felloes, the rim of the wheel or even the spokes perhaps. By experience the blacksmith would know how much nip the tyre would stand. The wheel was measured round with a traveller, that is a disc about 10 inches in diameter in a handle and mark the rim of the wheel and put a mark on the disc and walk round it counting the revolutions and then roll it along the bar of iron to get the length of the tyre. The bending

machine is still in the little yard at the end of the workshop where the shoeing platform is. Perhaps it would have to be wound through the bending rollers a number of times to bring it down to the diameter, because the tyre for a heavy cart or wagon might be five inches wide and nearly three-quarters of an inch thick - pretty hefty steel - but on average I should think SVa" or 4" wide and 5/8" thick and the smaller ones for traps and so on, although usually they were fitted with solid rubber tyres by now. They might have been 1 1/4" wide. Here again in 1913 Joe Arnold, we talked about, the coach painter and barber, "2 wheels shod - 2/-". "Lee & Green: 2 large wheels shod - 5/- and a small wheel - 2/-" Take the next entry "4 wheels - 10/-" I think this was probably the price of a new tyre. It could well have been that the old tyre, as the wheels got old, the tyres became a bit loose. They would be cut and re-welded and refitted.

Looking at the ledger day book again in November 1914 again still of course a lot of shoeing. There is Jack Peek again, "hoop made, new hoop - 3/-". Proctor's farmers down towards Wykeham Abbey "4 new shoes - 2/4d." "Banks: new back band hook." The back band was the chain that went over the cart shafts, over the saddle, to take the weight of the shafts. Charlie Barks farmed just on the Weston ramper at the first corner on the Weston ramper, after the old Fulney Bridge or even the new Fulney Bridge. Charlie Banks farmed there. Father had been working there pretty well all day and when it was time to leave he went to the farmhouse to tell Charlie Banks that he was leaving to Mr and Mrs Banks. Charlie had a daughter. She was no beauty unfortunately and Charlie says, "Well, are you going up to say good-night to Doris? She is up in her bedroom." Father didn't take the bait and she was still a maiden lady when I knew her in the 1950s. Charlie Banks was a councillor and the local board which later became Spalding Urban District Council used to buy their horses through Mark Thorpe the horse dealer at the top of High Street. And Charlie Banks said, "Well, we don't have to go to Mark Thorpe to get our horses. If I need a new horse I could buy a horse from the council and save money. Mark Thorpe got to hear of this and at the next sale - and I'm sure this is a true story - at the next sale there was an old worn-out horse to come up to be sold and he waited until he saw Charlie Banks looking at the horse outside the stable. Mark said to his mate, "This is the horse we want. The council want a new horse so if we buy it I'll be able to sell it on to them." The lot came up and Charlie Banks bid and Mark Thorpe ran him up and up and up. Charlie Banks thought, "Well, if Mark Thorpe thinks this horse is worth this money it must be." And Charlie Banks ended up with a worn-out horse for a lot of money.

Here's "Beeby: a chaff-box handle repaired." Beeby's mill was at the far bottom end of Little London, almost on the Common, by the Racecourse, and they had a mill. I can still remember before I started work Mr Collins who worked for Beeby's mill driving round with the horse and trolley. In the years I suppose between 1945 and 1948.

"Harpham: one set of gate irons complete - f 18-4-6d." Here's another one 2 days later. "Harpham: 1 set of big iron gates - £25-6-4d." Harpham Brothers were in business just at the top of Osier Road, down Willow Walk, doing much the same sort of work as Groom Brothers in High Street: chicken houses, hay racks, mangers and chitting trays, but in a much smaller way. Three brothers in the 50s they were still nailing together chitting trays by hand on the bench when everybody else was manufacturing them with machines and electric nail drivers. They also had two other brothers who worked a small nursery, flower growing and tomato growing on the same site, just in Osier Road.

"Birch: nine shoes -£1.0.0. Shoulder chains - 7/4" and then there is W H Birch, that was Harold Birch who was the brother of George Birch the miller's in High Street. Harold Birch farmed just off the main road through Weston, main road top Holbeach, behind where Lindgarden is now. A chap come into the workshop, a chap I knew, a bit older than me, his father was farm foreman for Harold Birch at Weston, and he said "I can take you to the

field where the first sugar beet was grown in this area." Harold Birch it seemed grew it as a trial well before the beet factory was built in 1925 and the sugar beet was put into sacks and taken to Cowhirm where it was loaded on to one of Birch's barges and taken down to Fosdyke and then shipped across to Germany where there were sugar factories, to see if our land was suitable for growing sugar beet. I'm not sure how much longer we shall see sugar beet grown around Spalding as things are.

"Nicholls: a new back band and 2 shoulder chains." It looks as if the horses had to do a fair amount of work to wear out a shoulder chain and back bands. Nicholl's had a hay and straw business on the High Street which is now a shop almost opposite the workshop, opposite the old Chain Bridge. Hay and Straw merchants they were.

"The Local Board: 4 shoes." was what became the Urban Council. "Pannell: hold fasts - paid 8d." That was Joe Pannell who was the boat builder on Albion Street, then known as Marsh Rails Road. I certainly don't remember him building any boats. He certainly in the 30s had an odd boat drawn up upon the slipway that was still there, and a workshop was there. His general workshop was on the opposite side of the road to the river. The only boat that I know of him making was a model rowing boat about 4 feet long but properly clinker built, a replica almost, which was used for harvest festivals at the Pinchbeck Northgate Methodist Chapel, which was where the Pannell family had gone. I now understand it is - now that the Northgate Chapel has been closed - it is in St Thomas's Road Chapel, but it is still there. I'm not sure whether they realise the significance that this boat was built by Joe Pannell. I must enlighten them. Joe had charge of the contract to keep in repair most of the Drainage Board sluices in the area as far as Tydd. And Father would go out with Joe for several days at a time doing the ironwork and Joe looking after the woodwork. One of the sluices when it closed as the tide came in, the water was alive with enormous eels as thick as your wrist and the next day he took a length of stout string and a bit of wire and baited it and threw it in and left it. He brought home an eel as thick as your wrist and two and a half feet long or more, which my mother wouldn't touch. So he took it to his mother two or three doors along the road, who had cooked eels before and she cooked it and they had some, there was enough for both families. (010:11.10)

"Seaton: 2 shoes." Herbert Seaton had a little bakery and baker's shop just two or three doors down Commercial Road within 50 yards of the workshop - rather less. Behind the shop, backing on to Willow Walk, parallel to Commercial Road was the bake house. The bake house itself was very narrow and the ovens were only a matter of 6 feet probably and the kneading troughs there, and when they were emptying the ovens the window in the bake house onto Willow Walk was open. There was a flour sack tacked over the bottom half of the window when it was opened and the long handle of the peelee, when he was emptying the ovens came out four or five feet on to the road. It wouldn't have worked nowadays. On Saturday mornings Seaton made penny loaves which were put into a galvanised bath when they were baked and we kids and grown-ups as well, but we kids particularly, went to get a hot penny loaf straight out of the oven and slipped home to get a lump of cheese to put in the middle. Saturday mornings, for a penny! Herbert Seaton had a pony, but he also had a two-wheeled cart which was enclosed, a very tall cart for delivering bread by hand.

"Law: shoes." The butcher who had lived next door to Grandfather on the other side of the river, their yard was right up at the end of High Street almost opposite Seaton's bake house. Their slaughterhouse and paddock were down the yard and backing on to Law's slaughterhouse was Bert Barker's slaughterhouse. Here we have "a couple of shoes, B Barkus - 1/4d" and he had an older slaughterhouse down that yard and again a paddock behind the slaughterhouse. We as kids spent time watching slaughtering pigs and cattle. Pigs were killed with a pole axe and cows were shot, but if you could beg a pig's eye to play with, which we did from the slaughter man. (010:14.51)

Here's an item: "D (Dave) Smith: a shaft -1/-" but also "3 bars to the Ship'Albion' - 3/6" so it seems there was still apart from Birch's still some double-sized boats coming up in 1914. "T.O.Mawby (still in 1914) : a curtain rod; 2 hooks for motor house," which we can only guess was his garage. He had curtains but it was the first mention of anything that might be a car and one or two little jobs on lorries probably a year before - one of the signs of the times changing. Here is Charlie Banks again: "Hook on shaft". And then "Teeth rasped and extracted." Horses' teeth, if the molars at the back don't completely cross over one another, then the tooth is worn unevenly and the sharp edge left on the outside of the teeth, which would then rip the inside of the cheek as it would cut there. And quite often horses' teeth had to be rasped and there is a tooth rasp in the workshop. It is just a coarse rasp on a longish handle and is concave shaped. Horse I suppose didn't always like it and were usually backed into a corner of the workshop and perhaps often they would have to have a "twitch" on, which was a wooden pole, two-and-a-half feet long or so with a loop of thinnish rope in the end, which would be put over the loose bit on the front of the horse's top lip and then twis it up. The idea was strictly speaking wasn't to twist it up to cause pain but to distract the horse. But it depends how difficult the job was and how kind the horseman who was helping was. And the teeth were rasped down or extracted I understand. I never saw that done. I did see teeth rasped down and I have done it. Never seen a horse's tooth taken out but I understand it was just simply knocked out with a hammer and punch.

"Les Harvey: 4 shoes". Solicitor. He had a horse and Glead, that's Mr John Glead, later Sir John Glead, Chairman of the County Education Committee for many, many years. Knighted in about 1937, I think, and the Glead School named after him. He came to live in the big house next to Grandfather's little cottage, our little cottage, in the 20s. I think he moved there from London Road by the Victoria Bridge.

Here's an item, still in 1914: "Proctor: plough repaired, new beam and fitting, new breasts, 2 new axles in wheels, 2 links, hooks and clevis repaired, coulter laid, new clasps, new slipe and overhauling - 19/9d" A farmer friend from Coningsby said, "How often do you fit a new plough breast?" I said, "Hardly ever, I don't think that I have ever fitted new plough breasts, they just wear out. Of course, he works on stony land and probably has to replace plough breasts regularly, because they simply wear right through. Here's an item: "Stud key." We talked about frost studs being fitted in a square tapered hole in the heel of shoes; some of them were screwed in to a tapped hole in the heel and this key was for picking out the worn studs and replacing them. A fanner, or anybody with horses replaced his own studs without coming to the blacksmith having the square tapered ones taken out and refitted.

"Eley: 6 staples and 3 hasps -1/6". That's the haps and staples that Grandfather was making in Swineshead as an apprentice. "T.O.Mawby (again): 4 shoes, 2 teeth rasped - 3/4d." His brother, Don Mawby, who farmed at Holbeach St John's. Grandfather and Father used to go there to shoe his horses, that would be cold shoing in the farmyard or in the barn, the two of them would go probably for two consecutive days, so he had quite a few horses. His son certainly remembered him to a friend of mine and recalled Mr Dodd coming in his little Austin Seven. He did have an Austin Seven for a short time, but Don Mawby's son would not be very old then, but he did remember the blacksmith coming from Spalding to shoe the horses.

But as you go through the Day Book from 1914 on there are some mention of new names which crop up. Here's Stanger. Stanger's garage was in Westlode Street. "Two car steps: 4/-. Iron welded 6d." and other similar names, garage owners. Bolton took Stanger's later and several other owners of garages crop up and from some of the items. Here is again "Tom Mawby: Curtains in his garage." "Tractor draw gear: 15/-." That is the first sign of mention of tractors found in the day books. And "Lee & Green: Stays to windows on the

old motor." it says. "Carrier and number plates and lamp bracket on the new motor at Lee and Greens." This is still 1914.

Shoeing was still the greatest part of the work. In 1925/26 it had gone up to 6/- a set from 2/8d that it was in 1914 and the day work was charged 15/-. There is one item which puzzled me and still does. January 1920: "24 horse shod, for the army" I wonder where they came from? In 1920, not long after the First World War, I wonder perhaps as most usually the Army had their own farriers. Perhaps he had been ill.

There is an entry here. "Did." That's Grandfather's abbreviation for diddicoy. "Did. Stranger: 2 shoes, paid". And the new name for the garages "Spalding Motor Company" crops up. "Repair springs". And Bolton's Stanger's were mentioned - Blackburn's all garage owners, all gone. Several of them I can remember worked for the Electricity Company.

I talked about Father being a Registered Shoeing Smith. My father had never intended being a blacksmith; he was apprenticed to an engineering business in Mill Lane, a precision engineer, off Winsover Road. It later was Stanton's Iron Foundry and of course there was the railway line across Winsover Road down to Mill Lane from Glenn Avenue and a little turntable on the goods yard. And I think I can remember a railway truck being pulled by a horse across Winsover Road. There would never be an engine across there. But the business was merged and taken over by an engineering firm at Boston and Father had to move with it and went into lodgings for a while. He would have left school in 1914. First World War time, Grandfather was short handed and had my father come home to help in the workshop. I mentioned that Grandfather was a registered shoeing smith. My father wasn't, but I think that my father had more veterinary knowledge than Grandfather ever had, because he did a lot of work with Harry Reekes, the local vet there in Red Lion Street. Frederick Harry Reekes in the late 1800s was the vet and his son Harry Coulton Reekes

took over the business and he was a Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. He was an examiner in pathology and bacteriology to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and he was an acknowledged authority on the problems of horses' feet and legs particularly. In 1904 he published a book, "Diseases of the Horse's Foot". Another edition came out in 1925. (013: 02.42)

Father made for him, old Reekes had had for a still born calf but wouldn't abort. The vet had to remove it and a rather nasty looking hook at the end of a rope, which the vet with his hand would hook into the foetus and it would have to be pulled out with the rope. But unfortunately if the hook came loose it would very well tear the uterus of the cow. My father made for him a hook with a scissor action on two bits of cord so that when the hook was closed the whole thing was smoothed off. Father filed and polished it for Harry Reekes, and when he delivered it, Harry said, "Jim, I reckon this is your masterpiece". He said, "You shall have mine," and gave him a copy of his 1925 edition of his book, which I have still got.

In January 1937 my father made eleven visits to different farms to various horses, probably the first time he would go with Harry Reekes and then probably if he could cope with it, he would go alone after that to things like foot canker, which is rot that affects horses' feet and horses get xxx cracks in the hoof, particularly if they are not wearing shoes. A small crack forms and works its way up the hoof and far enough up to the quick, the live part of the inside of the foot and they get sore and septic. The usual treatment for that is to burn some horizontal grooves across the crack or possibly burn a hole at the top of the crack if you can see the crack before it reaches to the fetlock; burn a conical hole in which would, you hope, stop the crack from spreading further up.

For stones in horses' hooves a boy scout's knife isn't much good; the hoof is only on the outside part of the foot. The sole is a softer material altogether and a stone can get stuck in

this sole of the foot and probably disappear as the sole grows over it and would work its way up into the quick of the horse's foot. (013: 06.06) It would go septic and of course it would perhaps take a week or two to get to that stage. The hole the stone had gone into would have closed itself up again and it would build up considerable pressure and it would be a matter of digging into the sole with a blade with a curved tip and carefully digging down so that when you get to the top of the sole gradually you can see just a seeping of blood and you know the stone isn't there. So you have to make another hole by tapping round the outside of the foot and see when the horse flinches, you could probably get an idea of where the problem is, but that doesn't always work. But I have seen a horse's foot when you get through the sole and find that pocket of septic matter. I have actually seen it squirt perhaps a yard with such pressure that you, when holding the horse's foot, hear and almost feel the horse go "Haaa" with relief.

Another problem is lampas. The roof of the horse's mouth is ridged cross-ways from back to front. Sometimes the front just behind the front teeth, the roof of the mouth will swell and form a lump, which means the horse can't eat. I don't know what treatment for that would be now, probably a total anaesthetic and a knife job, but I once helped when I was only a lad. I was with my father when he did it and it was a matter of backing the horse into a corner, because you heated a piece of iron and actually burned, cauterised the lump off inside the horse's mouth, just behind his teeth. Just how sensitive to pain that bit of the horse's mouth is, I don't know. Docking tails. I never docked tails, but there are docking irons in the workshop, which again is a tool which you heat in the forge and cauterise the tail around the bit of bone that's left after the tail has been docked.

In 1925 there are items of ironwork for the beet factory that was being built then, and as you get close to the 30s strange names appear in the daybook: Wittennan and Moermann, Stasson and Ruysen and Van Geest - the bulb growers. Not all the bulb growers were Dutchmen and of course there was work for J T White and Seymour Cobly's and Culpin's who were all pioneers in the bulb growing and they were bringing in work. There were entries for the "local board" who were soon to become the Urban District Council. (013: 10.10) Round about 1935 my father went out without consulting his father and bought an acetylene welding plant and brought it back and took into the workshop. His father said to him, "What do you reckon you're going to do with that, boy?" Dad said it wasn't many days before welding jobs that would have been done in the forge which he would bring to Dad and say, "Do you reckon it would do this?"

Getting on to wartime. There was little or no new equipment for farmers, no new farm machinery and it meant that they had got to be repaired and kept working. I finished at Spalding Grammar School in 1947 with Higher School Certificate results just about good enough to get me to University. The option was given to us then of course: either we could go into the Army or do our National Service, which was 1 ½ years at that stage, or go to university and have the National Service deferred. Most of us and I opted for the Army as it was a bit more exciting than going to university. In December my father was very seriously ill and I managed to get some compassionate leave. Grandfather was struggling to keep the workshop going for Father. He was 81 or 82 at that time and still shoeing horses, bless his heart. Eventually, because I think the Army were able to get more details about Father's condition than we actually knew at the time, I was discharged, hoping for a temporary release and started work previously anyway in May, although I had used up quite a lot of leave between December and May. And Grandfather died in May, so that was only a year or short apprenticeship. Within a day or two of coming home I was pulling horse shoes off and within a couple of weeks I was nailing them on. But it wasn't like a lad just leaving school to start an apprenticeship. I was 19 and did know what it was all about of course. Most farmers had sold their horses quite quickly after the war, but the bulb growers were still using horses. There wasn't machinery for bulbs. There was some Dutch machinery but

it was not heavy enough or strong enough to cope with the heavier land that we've got over here. I spent a lot of time modifying and strengthening the Dutch bulb lifters, but most of the bulb growers were still using horses I should think until the early 1960s. There was no tradition of pony riding around the area, so once the farm horses had gone there was no more shoeing. After that I can only think of Dick Glenn who had a horses for pleasure riding. Dick's other hobby was sailing. He came to the workshop one day and wanted a ring to clamp round the mast of his boat with lugs on it to fix the wires to., He waited whilst I made it and half an hour or so later came back and said, "It doesn't fit." I said, "Dick, that's what you told me." He measured it and said, "That is what you told me. That's the diameter" He said, "Well, I got it right, didn't I? You measure round it and divide by two to get the diameter, don't you?" Ha!

But there was quite a lot of work for builders and garages, garages particularly. In the early years after the war there were no new cars of course and no spare parts for old ones and I should think barely a week went past when I didn't set up the semi-elliptical springs that most cars had, that had got tired and let the car down. We used to dismantle them and hammer them to get the bow back into them. Straightening front axle: if a car had an accident then the front axle often got bent and had to be straightened and lined up. My father's capacity for work was still very limited, in fact he did hardly anything for 4 years. But nursery production locally was expanding and greenhouse heating, fitting boilers and pipes provided us with quite a lot of work. He could manage the welding provided that I did all the lifting and cutting. And greenhouse heating and piping was quite a lot of work, particularly between September and Christmas. And then after a few years hot air heating was introduced but wasn't as economical, but the capital outlay was considerably less, which meant that the grower could build a bigger greenhouse and spend less money on the heating installation and get his return more quickly.

Ploughman's the millers in High Street, they had their own engineer until soon after I started work anyway and their machinery was getting old and really due to be replaced. I was frequently up there repairing machinery and often doing a jury rig to keep the machine going until the weekend, when probably Dodman's the millwrights of King's Lynn would come over and do a more permanent job and then of course all their machinery was replaced eventually.

Machines that were pneumatically operated and electronically controlled and I was out of my depth of course. The last horses had gone, my father had retired and I seriously wondering what to do. I was quite busy enjoying myself but frequently put in an 8 or 10 hour day repairing this or that, making this or that and at the end of the day having worked 8, perhaps 10 hours, added up the jobs and it came to 5 or 5/4 so that I really wasn't making a lot of money and the job wasn't stretching me. The workshop would then have been 160 or 170 years old. At one stage in the 50s the Council had plans to demolish it and straighten that bit of High Street out and those plans were scrapped it seems. It still had a fair amount of earth floor and the roof was getting bad; it wasn't really worth spending money on to improve it or leave enough space to rebuild. My grandfather had had a fair living, my father less so, the work certainly wasn't stretching me.

Salvation of a sort arrived with the setting up of the Flower Parade. In the first year I was not involved at all. In the second year I built a couple of floats. The manager of Stassen's on Pinchbeck Road brought along Con Van Driel, the float designer. I already did work for Stassen's and he brought Con Van Driel into the workshop and said, "I reckon this is the chap you are looking for." Stassen's wanted a float and I built Stassen's float and one other for the Post Office and Interflora, a joint-sponsored float that second parade. For the third parade I possibly did five floats and in the fourth parade and the gentleman from Stassen's, he said, "Geoff, you know, you could build all this parade." I said I couldn't, one

man couldn't do it. However, for 43 years I did for the last 20 years of those 43 years I actually built every float, except one each year. It was work that did stretch me, testing my ingenuity a little bit more than horse-shoeing and mending this and welding that.

Long hours, but there was a fair reward I suppose. By 1988 the workshop was in serious disrepair. Norman Humphries from the Council came to see me. No, he didn't, he wrote to me a rather officious sounding letter to start with. I think no doubt he had been instructed to do that. I think they wanted to know what I wanted to do with the workshop. They had in mind really putting a closure notice on it, which was really no more than it deserved in the state that it was in. So, after negotiation, I sold the workshop to the Council for £1 - which I never saw! They were not able to spend any money on it themselves when they owned it and it was restored. Geoff Sherman's company restored the workshop. They took off the old roof and rebuilt the front and back walls and made up new, using second-hand timber, made new roof principals and put back the pantiles. So that is actually not much changed since my grandfather took it, in fact not much changed I would think since it was built 100 years before that. The flower parade tapered off, shall we say over a few years, and I was getting already past retiring age and it was difficult to put a date on the time when I actually retired, but I suppose that I haven't done any chargeable work in the workshop for certainly two years anyway, by which time I was seventy-two, seventy-three nearly. That's it, I think.

And so, having started in 1569, with perhaps not very much detail, then with more that we know definitely from 1842 and then even more information after 1867, the story certainly for the last 102 years involving three generations and quite a lot of social history. But the workshop is still open for visits for anybody interested under the Spalding Ayscough Museum set-up and can be opened for visitors at almost anytime.