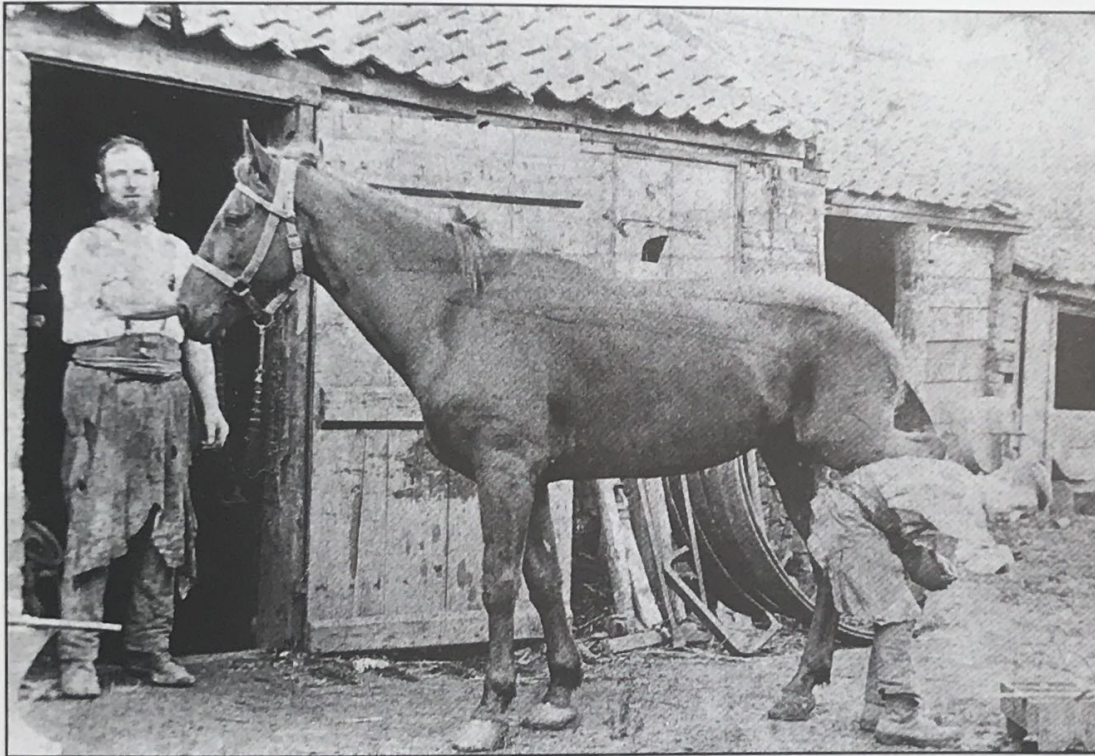


## 2 Horsepower is all



Motorised vehicles were still a rarity in rural England before 1914 and animal horsepower still held sway as the major means of transport and motive power on farms. An important figure in any village of size was the blacksmith.

John Slater's father-in-law, James Bailey (born 1897) was the last of three generations of blacksmiths in Crowland. For the best part of 100 years Baileys kept the forge at 3 West Street. The great-grandfather of John's wife Betty - also James - is believed to have been the first blacksmith in Crowland to have been awarded a Farrier's Certificate (right) and this, dated 1893, used to hang on the wall of the smithy. He is also credited with the first potato harrow ever to be made, for a farmer in Kent.

This photograph (above) of James Bailey senior was taken outside the smithy in West Street, probably sometime in the 1880s. He is holding the horse's head while his partner examines a rear hoof before fitting the shoe. James died on 23 April 1917, aged 78.

It was not only horses that needed shoes. Here (below) in the yard at West Street, Betty Slater's great-uncle Richard (left) is 'shoeing' a wheel with an iron tyre, assisted by his nephew James (centre, Betty's father) and his brother George William (Betty's grandfather, known as "Bill" Bailey). Richard seems to have been an example of the "village blacksmith" of the famous poem - he stood over 6 feet tall and was indeed a "mighty man".



James Bailey of Crowland,  
Peterborough was this  
day entered upon the  
register of the Worshipful  
Company of Farriers

July 20th. 1893

*Farrier's Certificate awarded to James Bailey senior.*

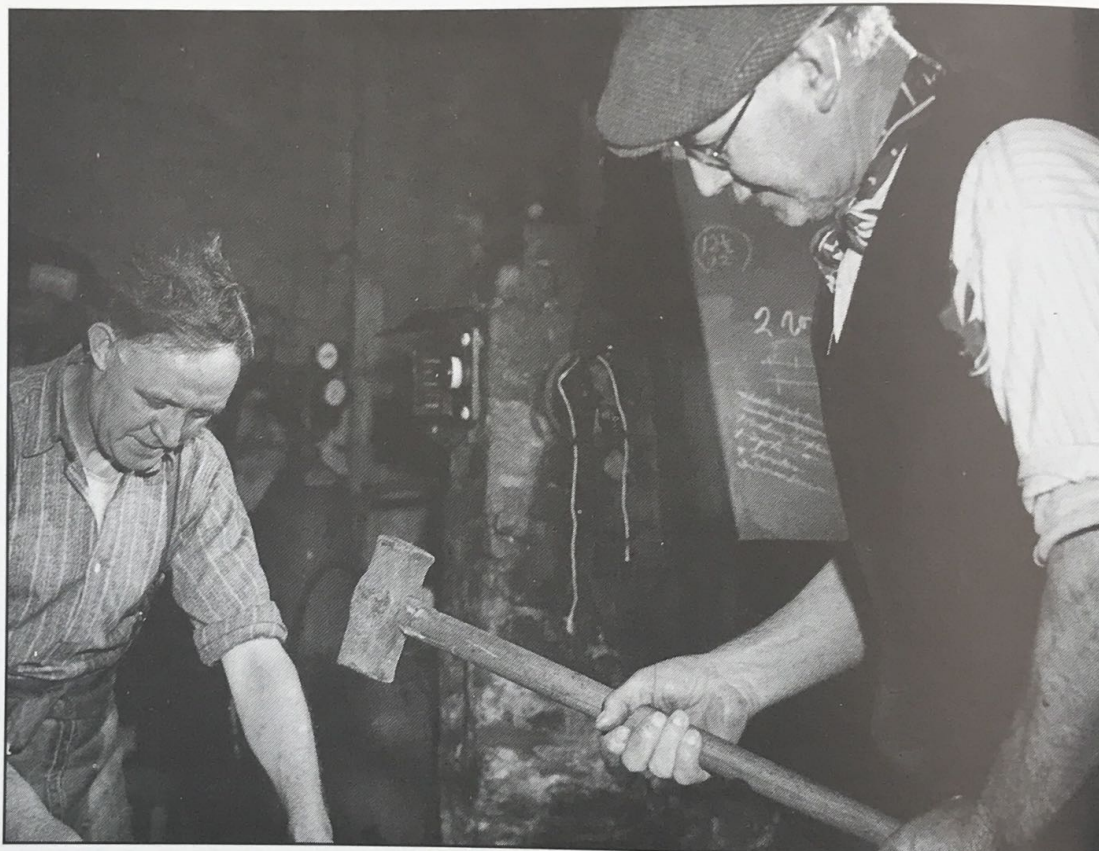
Here he is again (right) at work with James in the smithy. The three Baileys used to shoe most of the horses in the district and at one time they would make and fit 600 dozen pairs (sets of four) of horseshoes in a year.

The last of the three, Betty's father James, carried on the business. As well as the West Street premises, he maintained a small blacksmith's shop at Brotherhouse Bar, next to the former *Bull* public house on the road to Spalding. He travelled there by motorcycle and sidecar on Tuesdays and Fridays to provide a service to customers in and around Cowbit.

The blacksmith's shop at Brotherhouse Bar (below) stood approximately where the telephone box is now (1993). It was demolished in the late 1950s or early 1960s, as was the pub and some other buildings, due to road alterations.

James went on to become virtually the champion blacksmith of England, taking awards at shows and open events in all parts of the country. Between 1926 and 1954 he won about 60 open events including those at the Lincolnshire, Peterborough and Royal Norfolk Shows.

James Bailey (right) at a shoeing competition in about 1936. He won the clock.





Above (top), George Ransome from West Deeping, seen shoeing the horse, was a British and National Champion in the art. In shoeing competitions an assistant or striker was required to make the nail holes in the shoes. George and James Bailey often teamed up to strike for each other. George eventually became a Judge of shoeing competitions.

George Ransome and James Bailey (right) with some of their many trophies and medals. Photograph believed to have been taken in the early 1950s.

James Bailey (far right) in the 1950s, with some of the cups and medals he won in shoeing competitions, including Challenge Cups from both Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire Agricultural Societies.

James Bailey worked at the smithy



through both World Wars. Although called up for the 1914-18 war, he was sent home after a fortnight as being "indispensable to Crowland". His father and uncle could not manage all the horse shoeing at their two shops without him. In World War 2 he received a Government order for 2000 pairs

of mule shoes for the Burma Campaign.

However, after the war, horse shoeing declined as tractors increasingly replaced horses on the land. James then turned to ornamental wrought ironwork and continued with this until his retirement. He also repaired the Abbey Clock and in between times was a bell-ringer at the Abbey and acted as pallbearer when required.

He retired in 1962 at the age of 65, after having been a blacksmith for 53 years. He died on 4 December 1971 at the age of 74.

