

Blacksmith to Hardware Shop Owner

Once upon a time there was a blacksmith's forge. Every village needed one. Since *Weyland* the smithy of the Viking gods worked this land (and *Vulcan* the Roman god before him) any smith, their forge with noisy work using black metals and hell-fires always seemed mysterious and awe-inspiring. The very stuff of legends perhaps.

But *Stan Colmer*, the last blacksmith in Keinton was no fearsome character. With fewer working horses need shoe-ing and the general decline in the need for such skills, he opened a **Hardware** shop and was known to always have what you wanted !. This, too, closed - on 12th September, 1995.

The **Forge** still stands, now used as a shed, in the grounds of *Fairmeade*, High Street. Older beams were recycled in the construction and the date 1930 carved to record the new usage. The original flooring is still in place: huge stone shields slabs, nearly 10 cm thick and approximately 1m by 1.5 metre. It was enough to take the weight and fierce heat of the workings of a forge and its anvil.



Blacksmiths also worked as **Farriers**. Scattered around the surrounding grounds there are dozens of horse-shoes and cast off pieces of metal. Close by, in the garden, there seems to be a deep pit... for ash perhaps? More might be revealed after an imminent survey...

The work of the **Smithy** and the **Farrier** often overlapped. Children can remember going to the Blacksmith's Forge to watch horses being shod there. The smell of the shoe being applied to the horses' hoof was quite pungent!

*Any memories of visits to the smithy or farriers?
Any family members as blacksmiths?*

*Blacksmiths have worked in
Keinton for centuries.*

*In the 1841 national census
George Baily is listed as the
sole village blacksmith.*

*Fifty years later, there are
more: Thomas Stark and sons
Ernest and Edmund*

And of course there is another reminder of working horses: a huge water trough for the horses, made of stone slabs from the nearby quarry. Found in the orchards off Row Lane, now preserved at the adjacent Westfield House.

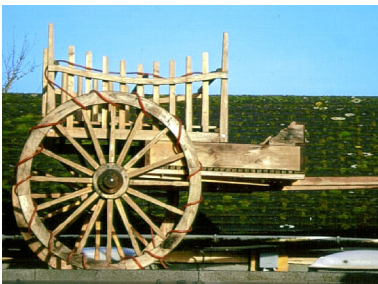
*Any more troughs lurking in
hedgerows?*



The **Farriers** was remembered as an exiting place for children



Anyone know of any true 'bonding' stones or carts/wagons nearby?



The photo on the right (loaned by Mrs Barbara Adams nee Paul) shows the forge workshop at the corner of Coombe Hill Rd /Castle St. (behind the sign post!) as it was when Joseph and son Eddy Paul worked the carpenter's shop next to the wheelwright's forge area.



The photos (left) were taken beyond Keinton, but are typical of the size of stones which would have been used for a cart (though this, left, is probably not a stone for wheel bonding, which usually had grooves for the spokes.)

The corner of Castle Str and Coombe Hill was the site of the **Farrier**, rememberd in the name of the bungalow on the site. Next to him was a **Wheelwright Jo Paul** (married to *Ida Grant*) and their son **Eddy** (married to *May Pullinger*, from Dorest then Charlton Mackerel, where her father worked for the *Thrings* family the 'Lords of the Manor') who was also a carpenter, cart-maker and coffin-maker with a wry sense of humour. Carts, then, were highly decorated, colourful and a real work of art! Eddy also worked closely with stoneworker *Harry Cabble* on many building jobs in the village.

Wheel-making was a dramatic affair and local children remember watching with great interest.

Marwood Brown remembers in the '30s and 40s:-

"First, the wheelwright made a large wooden wheel and spokes. This was placed on a huge stone wheel of the same size, usually embedded in the ground .

In the forge, the farrier would have prepared the metal rim to surround and 'bond' the wooden wheel to give it extra strength and durability. It was a tricky business! Hot metal touching dry wood could cause the wood to smoulder. So there was lots of water to splash about to cool the wood and shrink the metal, so as to get a tight fit on the wheel! "



One of Eddy's many tasks was as coffin-maker and undertaker. Here, wearing a sober suit and bowler hat, Eddy and May pose outside their home, Myrtle Cottage just behind their workshop. The business closed in 1966, as his son and daughter had both married and moved away.