
The Blacksmith's Shop

One very popular place to visit in our early years, particularly on wet days, was the Blacksmith's Shop. What a place to behold! This had consisted of a brick built house with the Blacksmith's stone built shop attached. The actual shop was comprised of two separate rooms, one for shoeing, with large wooden doors and a side window of wooden shutters to admit some light while actually being used. Then inside was the place of real interest, the forge itself. This part had a very low roof, four very tiny barred windows, and round the walls were pictures of "The Pilgrim's Progress". Tools also hung round the walls, held by webbing straps, these in turn being nailed to wooden racks. The anvil being the centre of operations and certainly of greatest interest to us, this of course could take a seemingly endless supply of tools, from chisels for cutting the iron off to length to formers for shaping and forming, all fitting neatly into square holes in its massive body.

The Blacksmith, a comparatively small man (not the large village blacksmith usually portrayed in books), would take the piece out of the furnace and work up a rhythm with the hammer before striking the horse-shoe or what ever job was in hand - pure joy to watch, and hear then the hiss as he dipped it in the water bath.

He could well entertain us with coloured sparks made by throwing iron filings into the blazing hearth. He might allow us to pump the bellows, or we might just watch him making horseshoes or some other job on the anvil. Horseshoes were, as with most other things, made as required. People would take their pots and pans, kettles, etc. to be mended. He would solder them - "Sodder" it was always pronounced - another process we liked to watch.

I truly would still like to be a village blacksmith, if there is such a person left.