

The Blacksmith's Shop, Lythe

The Blacksmith's Shop, Lythe is situated opposite The Stiddy and was once a busy and important part of village and rural life. It was an integral part of equestrian and farming life, and also involved in the making and upkeep of carts, wagons, carriages and traps.



The former Blacksmith's Shop located on the left

It has long ceased to ring to the sound of hammer on steel, or glow with the heat from the familiar blacksmith's forge, but the shop still stands as a reminder of its more industrious past. Immediately to the west gable end, facing the Common, is evidence of its history which includes the once familiar tools involved in the fitting of the solid iron tyres which circumvented the wooden wheels used for all carts and carriages. These tools and their story are for us an echo of days gone by and are a fascinating insight for residents and visitors alike.



Wheel held down on thick steel 'base plate' awaiting the red-hot tyre being heated in the fire in the background. The hooks for transporting the hot tyre stand by the 'base plate'

During the Industrial Age iron strakes were replaced by a solid iron tyre, custom-made by the blacksmith. After the wheelwright had measured each wheel to ensure a correct fit, the iron tyres were made. They were made marginally smaller than the wheel in circumference, placed on the 'base plate', then expanded by heating on the fire and then hammered and pulled by the 'devil's claw' (a levered hook) onto the wheel. It was then rapidly cooled with water from the 'ducking or cooling pool' close by. The tyre shrank onto the wooden wheel, at the same time 'nipping up' the wooden joints.



Rapid cooling the new tyre onto the wheel

With the onset of two world wars, the trade of making these wheels and tyres went into decline and by the 1960's was very rare and restricted mainly to state and ceremonial vehicles.