

GOODBYE OLD FRIEND

A SAD FAREWELL TO THE WORKING HORSE

Simon Butler

Our relationship with the working horse, which had existed since prehistoric times, reached its peak during the long reign of Queen Victoria. Truly this was the age when the horse was king. On the farms of Britain little moved without horse power and the coming of the railways only increased the number of horses in the country. Yet following the First World War, the Empire of the Horse evaporated, and within a few decades the working horse had disappeared almost entirely from the British landscape. In *Goodbye Old Friend*, Simon Butler explores the reasons for this change and the effect it has had on our lives. The story follows on from the his bestselling book *The War Horses* in which he describes the fate of the horse during the 1914-18 war, in which over a million horses died on the Western Front alone.

Here the author looks in detail at the prominence of the working horse in rural Britain during Victoria's reign, the challenge of steam power and the internal combustion engine, and the movement of population away from the countryside. The devastating effect of the First World War is then examined, followed by the years in which the world of the working horse quickly faded from memory.

The inclusion of 300 photographs and first-hand accounts help illustrate the story of why the decline of horse power was so rapid, and bring home to the reader the social significance of the disappearance of horses from daily life.

Here we discover the loss of the working horse was, in part, our loss too.



THE AUTHOR

Simon Butler lives and works in the Westcountry. A publisher of many hundreds of titles he has also written and edited books ranging from novels to books on art. His book *The War Horses*, published in 2011, reached number one in military hardback sales and has been reprinted several times. That volume grew out of his interest in the First World War and in his friendship with those who keep alive the bond between humans and the horse. This new book continues the story of the working horse, following it through the nineteenth century to its fall from use in the British rural landscape in the decades after the Great War.

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Blacksmith Jack Thorne and his apprentices making horseshoes on an anvil outside the smithy in Pimperne, Dorset.

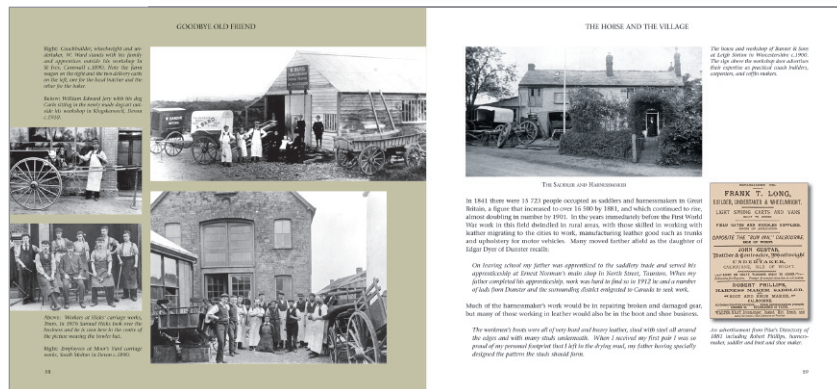


Sydney Ashman and his assistants outside the saddlery at Thatcham, Berkshire c.1910.

Right: Late spring and the ground that was ploughed in the autumn is prepared for drilling seed. This scene is at Litcham in Norfolk, taken c.1915.



Workers at Pittescombe Farm near Tavistock in Devon c.1900. The average size of farms in the area would be under 100 acres, larger farms such as Pittescombe at over 200 acres required five heavy horses and half a dozen labourers as seen here.



Example of a double-page spread.



A classic photograph of a blacksmith shoeing a grey horse at South Tawton in Devon c.1910.