

GOODBYE OLD FRIEND REPRINT

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 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.

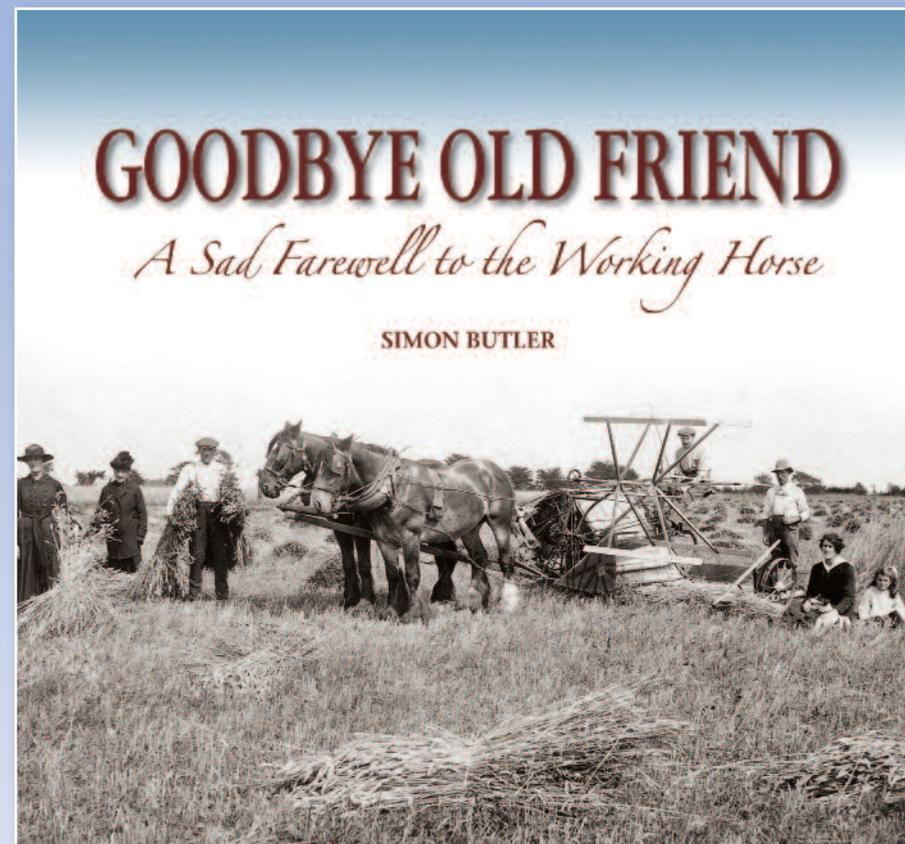
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*, which tells of the tragic fate of the animals taken to war reached number one in military hardback sales. 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, and *Goodbye Old Friend* continues the story of the working horse through to its disappearance from the farming landscape in the decades after the Great War. His latest book *The Farmer's Wife* celebrates the women whose working traditions lie in the land.

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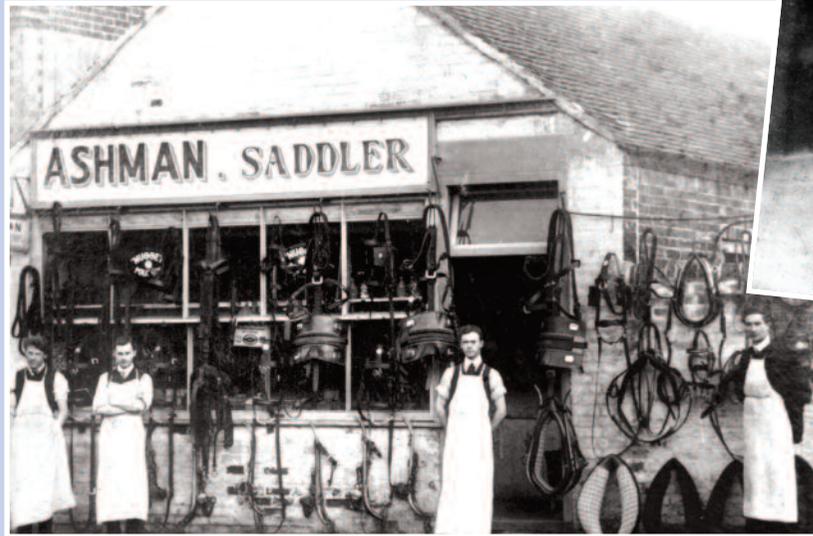
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GOODBYE OLD FRIEND

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.



Above: 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.



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

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

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



Example of a double-page spread.

GOODBYE OLD FRIENDS

Over 1,000,000 horses were used in Great Britain in 1914. By 1920 the number had fallen to 500,000. In 1930 it was 250,000. In 1940 it was 150,000. In 1950 it was 100,000. In 1960 it was 70,000. In 1970 it was 50,000. In 1980 it was 30,000. In 1990 it was 20,000. In 2000 it was 15,000. In 2010 it was 10,000. In 2020 it was 8,000.

THE HORSE AND THE VILLAGE

The horse and the village. In 1914 there were 1,000,000 horses in Great Britain. In 1920 there were 500,000. In 1930 there were 250,000. In 1940 there were 150,000. In 1950 there were 100,000. In 1960 there were 70,000. In 1970 there were 50,000. In 1980 there were 30,000. In 1990 there were 20,000. In 2000 there were 15,000. In 2010 there were 10,000. In 2020 there were 8,000.