The Local Forge

My great-grandfather Peter Ryder was the blacksmith in the Louisburgh area long ago so I decided to find out about him. A blacksmith's job was very hard. They had to make and put shoes on horses. They worked in a forge which is like a very small house. It had a fire burning at all times. It was very hard for them in the summer because of the heat. They much preferred the winter time.

This was a typical day in the life of my great-grandfather. He would get up at seven o'clock in the morning and check the rota to see who was coming to get their horse shoes fitted that day. Because he was the only blacksmith in the Louisburgh area people would come from far and near to get the horses shoes fitted. He put on a bib to cover him and dark black goggles to shield his eyes. When he was ready to get started he would cycle out to the waiting horses and lead them to the forge. He only worked on one horse at a time while the others were tied up.

Some of the tools he used were the bellis, which was used to keep the fire burning all day long, and the anvil, which
was used to make the horse shoes. During the day he was always busy. While he was fitting the shoes the horse would hold up its leg to help. Before he put the shoes on he'd pare the hooves. To secure the shoes he would hammer certain nails into them. He put shoes on at least eight horses at his busiest. After he was finished with the horses there were always little jobs to be done, like repairing ploughs which the horses used to plough the fields. If he ever had any spare time he used to make iron gates from bits of iron lying around the forge. He'd work from about seven in the morning until seven in the evening. The only day he didn't work was a Sunday.

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