

# Craftsman whose business served Lydney well

A CRAFTSMAN whose business used to play an important role in the life of the Lydney district, has experienced considerable changes in Lydney since the days of horse-drawn transport.

Former Lydney saddler, Mr. William H. Newnham, of 8, Purton Place, now in his 80th year, was in business in the town for over 30 years. Born at Norton St. Phillip, near Bath, where his father was a farmer and house decorator, Mr. Newnham came to Lydney in 1909 to work for Lydney saddler Mr. John James, who occupied premises opposite the Bridge Hotel in Newerne Street.

Mr. Newnham served his five years' apprenticeship at Hinton Charterhouse near Bath, with a starting pay of one shilling a week, rising to five shillings a week at the end of his apprenticeship.

## MILESTONE

When Mr. James emigrated to Canada in 1912, Mr. Newnham bought his business, consisting of harness-making and repairs.

The year 1916 was another milestone in his early career. Mr. Newnham got married, and moved his saddlery to his new home at No. 10 Newerne Street, situated between Mr. G. Ivor Griffiths' shop and Burton's former Lydney stores. He carried on his business at these premises until 1940, when his trade had declined to such an extent that he had to leave it, and he became a storekeeper at Pine End Works.

In the days when horses were

Thirty brewery horses used to be stabled in the old foundry yard. His customers were from a large Forest area, covering from Tutshill to Westbury, his principal customers being farmers, timber hauliers, as well as his colliery contracts.

During the peak of his career Mr. Newnham used to employ his late brother, Arthur, and two other assistants to help with the volume of work, but at the end of the first world war, with motorised transport arriving on the scene, his business began to decline very gradually "until there was not a horse left in Lydney streets".

He can remember Newerne Street when there was hardly enough room for two horse-drawn vehicles to pass each other. Those were the days when horses and traps used to be hired out for outings, all agricultural and coal hauling work was done by horses, road passenger transport was by

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supreme in the life of the district, Mr. Newnham led an extremely busy life, helped by his wife and his brother. He used to work 60 hours a week, from seven in the morning until seven at night, except on Fridays and Saturdays when he worked until 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. respectively. On Thursdays, early closing was at 2 p.m.

Mr. Newnham's saddlery covered everything connected with leather, from school satchels to heavy cart harness and bridles. He also had contracts with local collieries—Parkend Deep Navigation, New Fancy, and Princess Royal. He says that there used to be 80 horses to look after at Princess Royal. Mr. Newnham's work used to take him underground occasionally, but most of his colliery saddlery was done on the surface. He attended the collieries once a

horse-drawn buses and brakes, and a local sporting fixture used to be a day's outing for the visiting team.

## CAME INTO SHOP

Mr. Newnham first met his Somerset-born wife in 1913, when she came to his Newerne shop to have a pair of leggings repaired. During the first world war Mrs. Newnham used to help her husband at his bench, and in addition she was kept busy sewing buttons and chevrons on soldiers' battle-dresses. During that war Mr. Newnham, as a stretcher bearer, used to carry war-wounded cases from the town station to the hospital at Lydney Town Hall. In his very active life, he has been handicapped since the age of 10 with a leg disability.

Mr. and Mrs. Newnham have been married for nearly 53 years.