

The Village Blacksmith

A Tribute to the Memory of the late John Hall



John Hall

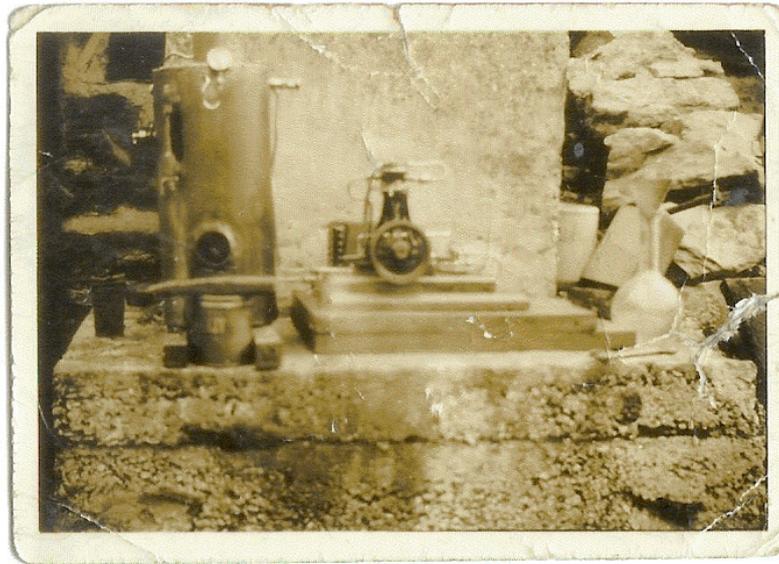
I have a story to relate
Of Bradwell's village smith,
Who in his prime was ta'en by fate
From 'mongst his kin and kith.

Activities of every grade
Proved his ability:
He handled tools of many a trade
With like facility.

His customers brought what they chose-
He'd put it right, of course,
He'd ring a pig, or mend a plough,
Or shoe a restive horse.

He e'en possessed a dynamo,
And used electric light:
Which in a village then, you know,
Was quite a novel sight.

The loafers round the door would lurk,
Nor were they driven off:
They liked to see the lathe at work,
And hear the engine cough.



One of John Hall's devices

The water-turbine's soothing purr,
Quite free from jerk or jar:
The petrol engine's rapid whirr,
The home-made motor car.



*John Inglefield Hall behind
the wheel of his grandfather's car*

His skill included cycles, too,
Of every type and stamp,
Anon, above the hubbub, you
Might hear the blazing lamp.

And often bore both iron and steel
The imprint of his might:
For, broken share or damaged wheel,
He'd quickly put it right.

Our drinking water was his care:
Where'er the frost would point
A weak pipe out, he soon was there
To make the plumber's joint.

And in the village chapel may
His handiwork be seen:
He took the old oil lamps away
And brought acetylene.

All kinds of schemes he organised
With skill that made him famous:
His erudition oft surprised
Some town bred ignoramus.

His quiet thoughtful way was such
As indicated power:
He handled with a master's touch
The business of the hour.

But while his strength was at its height,
Fate struck the cruel blow:
Although he made a gallant fight
'Gainst the relentless foe.

His mighty frame withstood the shock
Of Death's first icy touch:
But human frailty death may mock
When once we're in his clutch.

At first it took his speech away
 No more his voice was heard
And though he lingered many a day,
 He uttered ne'er a word.

His once strong arm, now withered up,
 Hung limply by his side:
And to the dregs, the bitter cup
 He drank, of humbled pride.

Though paralysed, he fenced with death,
 And struggled neath its yoke:
But later on it stayed his breath
 Beneath a second stroke.

A fixture he had always seemed,
 A universal friend:
So strong and well that no one dreamed
 He was so near his end.

He passed away: and soon 'twas found
 That no one man could do
The things that formed his daily round
 Nor put his projects through.

His life cut short: we wonder now
 Why such a thing should be:
But God decides, and men must bow
 With due humility.

James Page Barber 1915