

July 1848

My name is Charles Isaac, I am 61 years old and I am the blacksmith at Foxham¹. My son, he's also called Charles, works with me and will one day take over the business.

A lot of my work comes from the farms, I make the metal fittings to mend carts and metal tyres for wheels. I am always being asked to repair or make ploughshares. A big stone can easily break a plough, the ploughmen aren't very careful you see, although they would tell you the stones are hidden. Then of course I am kept busy making shoes for horses.

My forge is just along from the lower lock at Foxham². The canal boats pass by regularly, quite often the steerers come to see me as their boat horse has thrown a shoe.

Since the canal was opened (1810) for regular traffic the canal company have come to me when they are repairing locks and bridges³. I have fashioned all sorts of metal pieces, from winding gear for lock gates to straps for bridges, I make tools as well.

There is enough work in Foxham for two Blacksmiths, Tom Hayden is a blacksmith just down the road. He doesn't do any canal work though⁴, the farms keep him busy.

William Hodgeson, the carpenter at Pewsham comes to see me and tells what he needs me to make for the canal company. Last month I made some new handrails for the top lock gates at Pewsham. When they were ready Mr Hodgeson arranged for a boat to take them down to Pewsham, where he fitted them to the gates.

I do go down to Pewsham sometimes to see what is needed, Pewsham has a dry dock and they are always busy repairing boats. I make all the metal parts for the boats, right down to the nails and hinges.

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¹ 1851 census lists Charles Isaac and his family living at Foxham

² 1861 census lists blacksmith next to Lock cottage

³ Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre 2424/34 Wilts and Berks Disbursements Ledger lists Isaac- Example 14 September 1847 £1. 11s

⁴ 1861 Census Thomas Hayden listed as a blacksmith a few entries away from Isaac. Speculation Hayden did not do work for canal company. I cannot find him listed in the ledgers.