

Shire Horses

When I left the RAF I had one of the more glamorous jobs, I was a Spitfire pilot. I was also privileged to fly the mark X1V which was fitted with the new Griffon engine instead of the Merlin. The Griffon was much larger than the Merlin with an extra thousand horse power and rated at three thousand three hundred HP.

After being demobilized I went back to my old job as a store keeper in a shoe and slipper factory but after about eighteen months I decided that I wanted an outdoor job.

My father was a lorry driver with British Rail and from a boy I had wanted to be a lorry driver so why not follow in his footsteps. I applied for a place at Accrington goods depot where he worked and was accepted but then the problems started. They still had some Shires working there and before you could be a lorry driver you had to be a carter. The only things I knew about horses was that they had a leg at each corner, they hadn't to go on the pavement and they had a tendency kick at one end and bite at the other but not deterred I decided to have a go.

Day one: I worked in the stables doing what you do in stables and the permanent stableman showed me where the various pieces of equipment went on a working horse.

Day two: How to attach a horse into the shafts of a lorry and lead it around without it standing on you feet [I'm sure that the horse knew more about the job than I did] .

Day three: A man came all the way from Manchester to pass me out as a carter. I must be a quick learner because I passed.

Day four: I was out in the streets of Accrington making deliveries and collections. The point of my story is that I had gone from Three Thousand Three Hundred H P to one HP and managed to survive.

By the way, the name of my horse was CLARENCE.

Peter Proctor